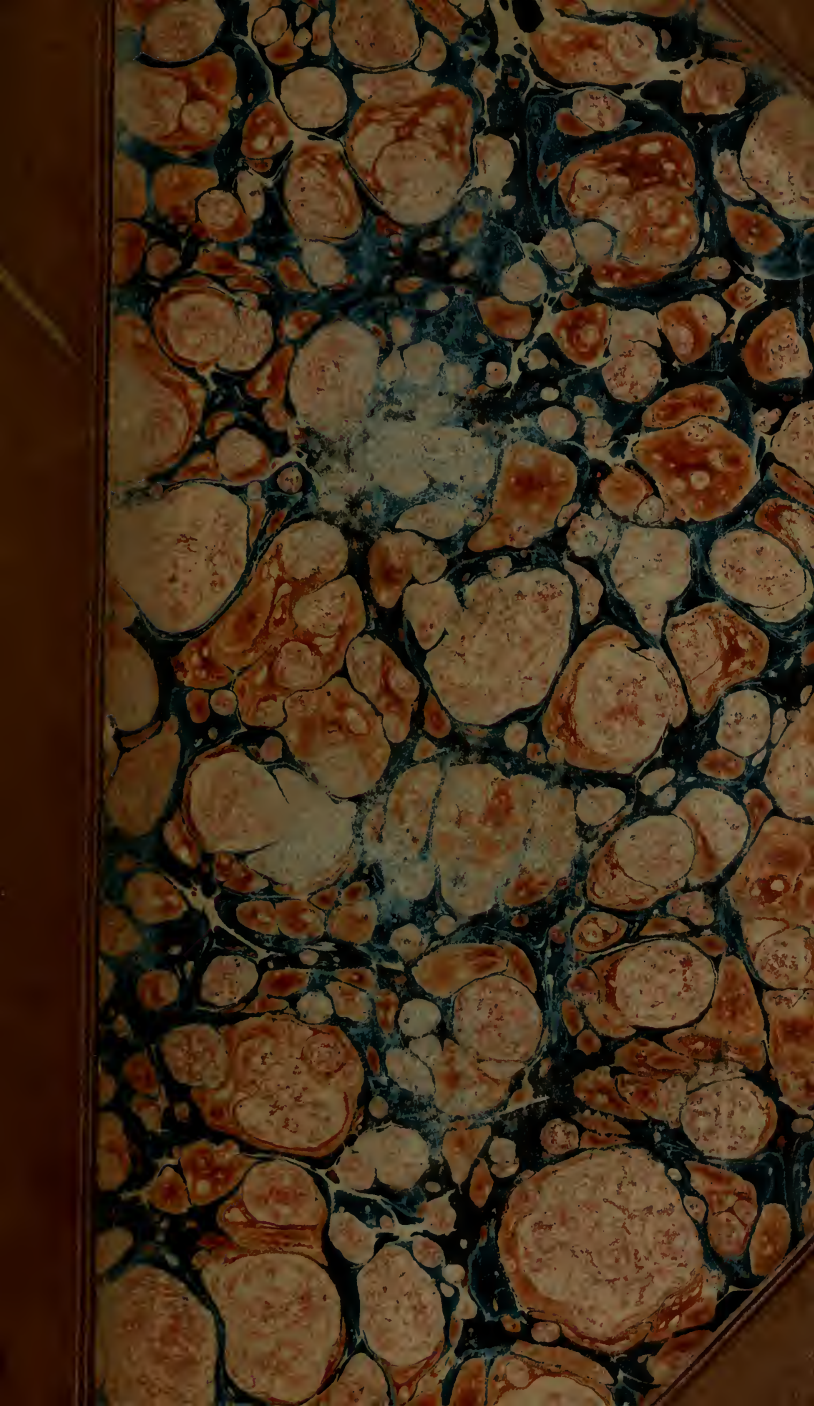




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A R R A H N E I L ;

OR,

T I M E S O F O L D .

B Y G . P . R . J A M E S , E S Q .

AUTHOR OF "RICHELIEU," "DARNLEY," "THE SMUGGLER,"
ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ARRAH NEIL; OR, TIMES OF OLD.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT two centuries ago, in times with which we are all familiar, as they comprised a period of English history, the events of which have affected the social condition of the British people more than almost any which have preceded or followed that period—about two centuries ago, there stood upon the slope of a gentle hill, in a picturesque part of England, an old brick mansion of considerable extent, and of a venerable though flourishing exterior. On the right hand and on the left there was a wood of various trees, amidst which Evelyn

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might have delighted to roam, choice children of the British forest, mingled with many a stranger grown familiar with the land, though not long denized in it. In front was a terrace flanked with quaintly-carved flower-pots of stone; and beyond that stretched a lawn several roods in extent, leaving the mansion fully exposed to the eye of every one who wandered through the valley below. Beyond the lawn, again, a wide view was obtained over a pleasant scene of hill and dale, with the top of a village church and its high tower peeping over the edge of the first earth-wave; and far off, faint and grey, were seen the lines of a distant city, apparently of considerable extent. The house itself had nothing very remarkable in its appearance, and yet circumstances compel us to give some account of it, although it is but building up to pull down, as the reader will soon perceive. The middle part consisted of a large square mass of brick-work, rising somewhat higher, and

projecting somewhat farther, than the rest of the building. It had in the centre a large hall-door with a flight of stone steps, and on each side of the entrance were three windows in chiselled frames of stone. On either side of this centre was a wing flanked with a small square tower, and in each wing and each tower was a small door opening upon the terrace. Manifold lattices, too, with narrow panes set in lead, ornamented these inferior parts of the building in long straight rows, and chimneys, nearly as numerous, towered up from the tall peaked roofs, not quite in keeping with the trim regularity of the other parts of the edifice. The whole, however, had a pleasant and yet imposing effect when seen from a distance; and to any one who looked near, there was an air of comfort and cheerfulness about the mansion which well compensated for the want of grace. The view, too, from the terrace and the windows was in itself a continual source of calm and high-toned

pleasure to the minds that dwelt within, for they were those that could appreciate all that is lovely, more especially in the works of God; and over the wide scene came a thousand varying aspects, as the clouds and sunshine chased each other along, like the poetical dreams of a bright and varying imagination. Morning and sunset, too, and moonlight and mid-day, each wrought a change in the prospect, and brought out something new and fair on which the eye rested with delight.

It was evening; the lower limb of the large round sun rested on a dark line of trees which filled up one of the slopes of the ground about six miles off; and above the bright and glowing disc which seemed to float in a sea of its own glory, were stretched a few small dark clouds, edged with gold, which hung over the descending star like a veil thrown back to afford one last look of the bright orb of day, before the reign of night began. Higher still the sky was blushing like a bride; and woods

and fields, and distant spires and hills, all seemed penetrated with the purple splendour of the hour. Nothing could be fairer or more peaceful than the whole scene, and it was scarcely possible to suppose that the violent passions of man could remain untamed and unchastened by the aspect of so much bright tranquillity.

Winding along at the foot of the hill, and marking the commencement of what might be called the plain—though, to say the truth, the wide space to which we must give that name was broken by innumerable undulations—appeared a hard but sandy road, from which a carriage-way led by a circuit up to the mansion. In some places high banks, covered with shrubs and bushes, overhung the course of the road, though in others it passed unsheltered over the soft, short grass of the hill; but just at the angle where the two paths separated the ground rose almost to a cliff, and at the bottom was a spring of

very clear water gathered into a little stone basin.

By the side of the fountain, at the time we speak of, sat a figure which harmonized well with the landscape. It was that of a young girl, not yet apparently sixteen years of age. Her garb appeared to be that of poverty, her head uncovered by any thing but rich and waving locks of warm brown hair, her face and neck tanned with the sun, her feet bare, as well as her hands and her arms above the elbows, and her apparel scanty, and in some places torn, though scrupulously clean. She seemed, in short, a beggar, and many a one would have passed her by as such without notice; but those who looked nearer saw that her features were very beautiful, her teeth of a dazzling whiteness, her limbs rounded and well formed, and her blue eyes under their long jetty eyelashes as bright, yet soft, as ever beamed on mortal man. Yet there was something wanting in her face, an indefinable some-

thing, not exactly intellect, for there was often a keen and flashing light spread over the whole countenance. Neither was it expression, for of that there was a great deal. Neither was it steadiness, for there frequently came a look of deep thought, painfully deep, intense, abstracted, unsatisfied, as if the mind sought something within itself that it could not discover. What it was, it is difficult, nay impossible to say. Yet there was something wanting, and all those who looked upon her felt that it was so.

She sat by that little fountain for a long time, sometimes gazing into the water as if her heart was at the bottom of the brook; sometimes, suddenly looking up, with her head bent on one side, and her ear inclined, listening to the notes of a lark that rose high in air from the neighbouring fields and trilled the joy-inspired hymn under the glowing sky; and as she did so, a smile, sweet, and bland, and happy, came upon her lip, as if to her

the song of the lark spoke hope and comfort from a higher source than any of the earth.

While she was thus sitting, more than one horseman passed along the road, but the poor girl gave them only a casual glance and then resumed her meditations. One or two villagers, too, on foot, walked on their way, some of them giving her a nod, to which she answered nothing. A thin and gloomy looking personage, too, with a tall hat and black coat and doublet, rode down from the mansion, followed by two men of somewhat less staid and abstinent appearance, and as he passed by he first gazed on her with not the most holy smile, but the moment after gave her a sour look, and muttered something about the stocks. The girl paid him no attention, however, and he was likewise soon out of sight.

At length a horse trotting briskly was heard coming along the high road ; and a moment after, a gay cavalier, well mounted and armed, with feather in his hat and gold upon his

doublet, long curling locks hanging on his shoulders and heavy gilt spurs buckled over his boots, appeared at the angle of the bank. There he pulled up, however, as if doubtful which path to take, and seeing the girl he exclaimed in a loud but not unkindly tone, "Which is the way to Bishop's Merton, sweetheart?"

The girl rose and dropped him a graceful courtesy; but for her only reply, she smiled.

"Which is the way to Bishop's Merton, pretty maid?" the stranger repeated, bringing his horse closer to her.

"The village is out there," replied the girl, pointing with her hand along the road; "the house is up there," she added, turning towards the mansion on the hill; and then she immediately seated herself again with a deep sigh, and began once more to gaze into the fountain.

The stranger wheeled his horse as if to ride up to the house, but then paused, and springing to the ground, he turned to the girl once more, asking, "What is the matter with you,

my poor girl? Has any one injured you?— Is there anything ails you? What makes you so sad?”

She looked in his face for a moment, with a countenance totally void of expression, and then gazing down into the water again, she resumed her meditations without making any reply.

“She must be a fool,” the stranger said, speaking to himself. “All the better for her, poor girl; I wish I were a fool too. One would escape half the sorrows of this life if we did not understand them, and half the sins, too, if we did not know what we were about. What a happy thing it must be to be a rich fool; but she is a poor one, that is clear, and the case is not so fortunate. Here, sweetheart, there’s a crown for thee. Good faith! I am likely, ere long, to thank any man for one myself, so it matters not how soon the few I have are gone.”

The girl took the money readily, and dropped

the giver a low courtesy, saying, "Thank your worship—God bless you, sir!"

"He had need, my pretty maid," replied the stranger, "for never man wanted a blessing more than I do, or has been longer without one." And thus speaking, he sprang upon his horse's back again, and rode up towards the house.

When he was gone, she to whom he had spoken continued standing where he had left her, meditating sadly, as it seemed, for several minutes; and at length she said in a low tone, "Alas! he does not come—he does not come. Perhaps he will never come again—oh, how I wish he would stay away!"

The whole speech was as contradictory as a speech could be, especially when the look and manner were taken as part and parcel thereof. But there was nothing extraordinary in the fact; for man is a mass of contradictions, and there is scarce one enjoyment that does not partake of pain—one apprehension that is not

mingled with a hope—one hope that is not chequered by a fear. Antagonist principles are ever warring within us, and many of the greatest contests result in a drawn battle. If, however, the girl's first words and the last had been evidently in opposition to each other, the wish with which she concluded was instantly belied by the glow upon her cheek, and the light in her eye, when she once more heard the sound of a horse's feet coming from the direction of the little town of Bishop's Merton.

“It is he!” she cried, with a smile, “It is he! I know the pace, I know the pace!” and running into the middle of the road, she gazed down it, while a horseman, followed by three servants, came on at a rapid rate, with a loose rein and an easy seat. He was a young man of seven or eight and twenty, with long fair hair, and pointed beard, tall and well made, though somewhat slight in form, with a grave and even stern cast of features, but a broad

high forehead, clear but well-marked brows, and lips full but not large. His face, as I have said, was grave, and seemed, as he rode forward, unsusceptible of any but a cold, thoughtful expression, till suddenly his eyes lighted on the poor girl who was watching him, when a bright and beaming smile broke over his whole countenance, and a complete change took place, like that which spreads over a fine country when the storm gives place to sunshine.

“Ah, Arrah Neil!” he cried, “my poor Arrah Neil, is that you come back? Where is your grandfather, poor child, have they set him free?” And he, too, sprang from his horse, taking the girl’s hand with a look of tender compassion.

“No, he is not free,” replied Arrah Neil; “he never will be free.”

“Oh, yes,” answered the gentleman; “these things cannot last for ever, Arrah. Time will bring about changes, I doubt not, which will

deliver him from whatever prison they have taken him to."

"Not from that prison," answered the girl, with tears rising in her eyes; "it is a low and narrow prison, Lord Walton. I told them he would die when they took him; and he only reached Devizes. But they are happy who sleep—they are happy who sleep;" and sitting down by the side of the well, she fell into thought again.

The stranger stood and gazed at her for a moment, without uttering a word. There are times when silence is more eloquent of sympathy than the choicest words of condolence. One of the servants, however, who had ridden up, and was holding his lord's horse, burst forth with an oath—"The roundhead rascals! I wish I had my sword in their stomachs! The good old man was worth a score of them."

"Hush!" said his master sternly; "hush! no such words in my hearing, Langan!"

"Then faith, my lord, I must speak them

behind your back," murmured the man ; but his master had taken a step forward, and was bending down his head to speak to the poor girl. "Come up to the house, Arrah," he said ; "you must not stay here alone, nor go back to the cottage either. Come up to the house, and my sister will comfort and be kind to you."

The girl gazed in his face for a moment, and then suddenly starting up, as if some remembrance flashed across her mind, she exclaimed, "No, no ! do not go home, sir ! Do not go there ! Misfortune will happen to you if you go there—I am sure it will—I am quite sure it will."

"But why, Arrah ?" asked her companion, with an incredulous smile ; "what makes you think that there is any danger ? Have you seen any of the parliament people there ?"

"There was Dry, of Longsoaken," replied Arrah Neil ; "but he came down again ; and it is not that. But I must not say what it is.

—Yet do not go up—do not go up! kind, good Charles Walton, do not go up!”

The young nobleman looked at her with an expression of much commiseration for her sorrows, but no reliance on her words. “I must go, Arrah,” he said; “you know my sister is there; and even if there be danger I must go. Come up, Arrah, there’s a good girl, and we will do the best we can for you in these sad times.”

The poor girl shook her head sadly, and after a moment’s pause, replied, “Ah! you think me a fool; and so I am, perhaps, for things trouble me much here,” and she laid her finger on her brow; “memories—memories that haunt me, but are like dreams that we try to recall distinctly after sleep is gone, and yet have but faint images of them, as of trees in a mist. But I am not a fool in this, sir; and I beseech you not to go.”

“Stay with her, Langan,” said Lord Walton, “and bring her up to the house. The fit is

upon the poor girl; and her grandfather's death may make it worse. You loved him well, and will be kind to her. Stay with her, good fellow, and persuade her to come up.—I must go now, Arrah," he continued, "but come up with Langan; for Annie will be glad to see you again, and will try to comfort you."

Thus saying, he remounted his horse, and rode onward up the hill.

CHAPTER II.

IN the well-sanded parlour of a small but neat inn, called the “Rose of Shaaron,” on the evening of the same day whereof we have just been speaking, and in the village, or town, as perhaps we should call it, of Bishop’s Merton—for it was beginning to give itself the airs of a great place—sat two personages finishing their supper, about half-past nine o’clock. Their food was a cold sirloin of roast beef; for the English nation were always fond of that plain and substantial commodity; and their drink was good English ale, the most harmonious accompaniment to the meat. The elder of the two was a hard-featured,

somewhat morose-looking personage, but of a hale, fresh complexion, with a quick grey eye. There was a great deal of thought upon the brow ; and round the mouth were some strong defined lines, we might almost call them furrows. He was as thin and spare, too, as a pair of tongs, but apparently strong and active for his age, and his long limbs and breadth of chest spoke considerable original powers. He was dressed altogether in black ; and though a tall steeple-crowned hat lay on a chair by his side, he wore, while sitting at meat, a small round cap of dark cloth, in the shape of half a pumpkin, on the top of his head. He had also a good strong sword leaning on the chair beside him, habited like himself in black, with steel points and hilt.

The other was a younger man, very different in appearance ; a good deal taller than his companion, and apparently more vigorous ; his face decorated with an immense pair of mustachios, and a somewhat pointed beard,

both of that indistinct hue which may be called whey colour. His hair floated upon his shoulders in the style of the cavaliers ; but to say the truth, it seemed somewhat unconscious of the comb ; and his dress, too, displayed that sort of dirty finery which by no means prepossesses the wary usurer, or experienced tradesman, with the idea of great funds at command on the part of the wearer. His doublet of soiled leather displayed a great number of ornamented buttons, and shreds of gold lace ; his collar and hand-ruffles were of lace, which had once been of high price, but had seen service probably with more masters than one, and had borne away in the conflict with the world many a hole and tear, more honourable in flag or standard than inhuman apparel. Hanging by his side, and ready for action, was an egregious rapier, with a small dagger placed beside it, as if to set off its length to greater advantage. On his legs were a large pair of jack-boots, which he

seldom laid aside, and there is even reason to suppose that they covered several deficiencies ; and hanging on a peg behind, was a broad beaver, very unlike the hats usually worn in England at the time, ornamented with a long red feather.

As to his countenance and its expression, they were very peculiar. The features in themselves were not bad—the eyes large and somewhat prominent. The nose, which was so pre-eminent as to form the chief object in the expanse of his countenance, whichever way his face was turned, was not altogether ill-shaped, and might have passed muster amongst the ordinary noses of the world, had it not been that it was set in the midst of a patch of red, which seemed to have transferred itself from the cheeks to unite in the centre of the face. The expression was bold, swaggering, and impudent ; but a touch of shrewd cunning was there, diversified every now and then by a quick, furtive look around, which seemed

to show that the worthy gentleman himself, like a careful sentinel, was always upon the watch.

Certainly, seldom were there ever seen companions more opposite than were there seated at supper on the present occasion ; and yet it not unfrequently happens, in this strange life of ours, that circumstances, inclination, or wayward fortune, makes our comrade of the way the man, of all others, least like ourself ; and of all the great general principles which are subject to exceptions, that which has the most is the fact, of birds of a feather flying together.

“ I have done,” said the elder of the two, laying down his knife.

“ Pooh, nonsense !” cried the other ; “ you haven’t eaten half a pound. I shan’t have done this half hour. I am like a camel, Master Randal. Whenever I have an opportunity I lay in a store in my own stomach for the journey.”

“Or like an ass,” replied the other gentleman, “who takes more upon his back than he can carry.”

“No, not like an ass either,” replied the man with the great mustachios, “for an ass bears the food for other people—I for myself. How can you or I tell that we shall get another meal for the next three days? ’Tis always right to prepare for the worst; and therefore, so long as my stomach will hold, and the beef endure, I will go on.”

“The man who never knows when he has enough,” answered his companion, “is sure, sooner or later, either to want or have too much, and one is as bad as the other.”

“Oh, your pardon, your pardon!” cried the tall man; “give me the too much. I will always find means to dispose of it—I am of the *too-much faction*. It’s my battle-cry, my rallying word. Give me the too much by all means. Did you ever see a carpenter cut out a door? Did you ever see a tailor cut out

a coat? Did you ever see a blacksmith forge a horse-shoe? They always take too much to begin with. There are plenty of bags in the world always wide open for superfluities; but, to say truth, I never found I had too much yet: that's an epoch in my history which is to come."

"Because, like other fools, you never know when you have enough," replied the man called Randal; "and as for your future history, it will form but a short tale, easily told."

"I know what you would say—I know what you would say," replied the other; "that the last act will find me in the most elevated situation I have ever filled, though I may still be a dependant. But I can tell you, my good friend, that in my many dangerous expeditions and important occupations, I have escaped the cross piece of timber and the line perpendicular so often, that I fear I am reserved for another fate, and am in great dread every time I go upon the water."

“You are quite safe,” replied the other, with a grim smile: “I’ll wager a thousand pounds upon your life, in a worm-eaten boat, with a hole in the bottom. But hemp, hemp—I would have you beware of hemp! Odds life! to hear you talk of your dangerous expeditions and important occupations——Cease, cease, I would sleep in peace to-night, and you will give me an indigestion.”

“Pshaw!” cried the other; “you have no more stomach than a pipped hen; and as to my exploits, what land have I not visited—what scenes have I not seen? To whom, if not to me, was owing the defence of Rochelle? To whom——”

“Hush,” hush!” said his companion; “tell the tale to others. I would as soon drink vinegar, or eat stale cabbage, as hear lies four times repeated—even with a variation.”

“Lies!” cried the other; “thunder and lightning, sir”——

“There, there,” cried his companion, quietly

waving his hand : “ that will do ; no more of it. Thunder and lightning will do nothing at your bidding ; so the less you have to do with them the better, lest you burn your fingers. Try to be an honest man ; leave off lying ; don’t swagger but when you are drunk ; and perchance you may be permitted to hold the horses while other men fight.”

“ Well, there is no use in quarrelling with a maggot,” replied his tall comrade ; and, taking to his knife again, he commenced a new inroad on the beef, in assailing which, at least, he kept his word with a laudable degree of fidelity.

In the mean while, the gentleman in black turned his shoulder to the table, and fell into deep thought. But after a moment or two he opened his lips, with an oracular shake of the head, not exactly addressing his speech to his companion, but more apparently to the hilt of his own sword, the point of which he had brought round between his feet, and the blade

of which he twirled round and round with his hands while he was speaking.

“Nine out of ten of them,” he said, “are either rank fools or cold-hearted knaves, presumptuous blockheads, who think they have a right to command, because they have not wit enough to obey ; or cunning scoundrels, who aim alone at their own interests, when they are affecting to serve only their country, and yet are fools enough not to see that the good of the whole is the good of every part.”

“Who, who, who ? Who do you mean ?” answered the other.

“English gentlemen,” replied the man in black ; “English gentlemen, I say.”

“Complimentary, certainly,” remarked his comrade ; “and by no means too general or comprehensive. I dare say it’s very true, though. So here’s to your health, Master Randal.”

“Let my health alone,” said Randal, “and take care of your own ; for if you drink much

more of that old ale, your head, to-morrow morning, will be as heavy as the barrel from which it comes, and I shall have to pump upon you to make you fit for any business whatsoever. Come, finish your supper, and take a walk with me upon the hill.—But who have we here? One of the rebels, I take it. Now, mind your part, but do not lie more than your nature absolutely requires.”

The last words of this speech were, as may be supposed, spoken in a low voice, an addition having been suddenly made to the party in the room where they were sitting.

The personage who entered was the same thin, self-denying-looking gentleman who had passed poor Arrah Neil, as she sat by the fountain in the morning, and had, in his own mind, charitably furnished her with a lodging in the stocks. That we may not have to return in order to relate this gentleman's previous history hereafter, we may as well pause here for a moment to say the few words that

are needed on the subject, especially as some reference may be made to his former life in another place.

Master Dry, of Longsoaken, as he was now called, had risen from an humble origin, and, though now a wealthy man, had commenced his career as the errand-boy of a grocer, or rather general dealer, in the village of Bishop's Merton. His master was a rigid man, a Puritan of the most severe cast, and his master's wife a buxom dame, given somewhat to the good things of life, especially of a fluid kind, which she employed the ingenuity of young Ezekiel Dry in obtaining for her, unknown to her more abstemious better half. He thus acquired some small skill in deceiving sharp eyes; and it was whispered that his worthy patron did not fail to give him further improvement in this peculiar branch of science, by initiating him into the mystery of the difference between a yard measure and a yard of tape or ribbon, between a pound weight and

a pound of sugar or butter ; between which, as the learned reader is well aware, there is a great and important distinction.

As worthy Ezekiel Dry grew up into a young man, his master settled down into an old one—and at length death, who, like his neighbours in a country town, is compelled occasionally to go to the chandler's shop, called one morning at the door of Ezekiel's master, and would not be satisfied without his full measure.

The usual course of events then took place—there was a widow, and a shopman—the widow was middle aged and wealthy, the shopman young and poor ; and Mr. Dry became a married man, and master of the shop. During a probation of twenty years, which his state of matrimony lasted, he did not altogether escape scandal ; but in those times, as in others, very rigid piety (at least in appearance) was not always accompanied by very rigid morality—and those people who conceived that they

might exist separately, looked upon the latter as of very little consequence where the former was pre-eminent.

At length, after having resisted time and strong waters (which her second husband never denied her in any quantity) to the age of nearly seventy, Mrs. Dry slept with her ancestors; and Mr. Dry went on flourishing, till at length he sold his house and shop to another pillar of the conventicle, and bought a good estate in the near neighbourhood, called Longsoaken. He still kept up his connexion with his native town, however, became a person of the highest consideration therein, took part in all its councils, managed many of its affairs, was acquainted with all its news, and was the stay of the Puritans, the terror of the parson, and the scorn of the cavaliers.

It was his usual custom, as he still remained a widower, to look into the Rose of Shaaron every fine afternoon, less, as he said, to take even the needful refreshment of the body,

than to pause and meditate for half an hour, before he retired to his own house ; but it was remarked that, on these occasions, he invariably had a small measure of some kind of liquid put down beside him, and consulted the host upon the affairs of everybody in the place.

In the present instance, Mr. Dry had received immediate information that two strangers had appeared at the Rose of Shaaron, between eight and nine, and he had hastened up from Longsoaken without loss of time ; but he had spent nearly half an hour with the landlord in an inner chamber, inquiring into all the particulars of their appearance and demeanour. Now, the landlord had lost more than one good customer in consequence of the unpleasant interference of his respected neighbour, who had occasionally caused some of the most expensive visitors at his house to be committed as malignants ; but as he dared not show any resistance, or make any remonstrance, to a person so high in authority as

Master Dry, of Longsoaken, his only course was to defend the characters of his guests as far as was safe. But the worthy host was a timid man, and never ventured to pronounce a decided opinion in the presence of his betters.

In answer, therefore, to the questions now addressed to him, he replied, "Oh dear no, worshipful sir! That is to say—for one cannot be certain of anything in this ungodly world—they do not look like it at all. Malignants are always gay in their apparel, and the gentleman is dressed just like yourself, all in black. He has got a Geneva scull-cap, too. I should not wonder if he were a gifted man like yourself."

"That may be a mere disguise," said Mr. Dry.

"Then, malignants are always roystering blades," continued the landlord—"calling for all manner of things, beginning with wine, and ending with strong waters. Now, these

good people have had nought but beef and ale ; though, doubtless, as all godly men may do for the comfort of the inner man, they will take something more warming before they go—but, as yet, one tankard of ale is all they have had.”

“That looks well,” said Mr. Dry, oracularly ; “not that I would condemn any man for using creature comforts in moderation, according to his necessity. Some men’s complexion, if of a cold and melancholic nature, does require such helps. I myself am driven to it—but what more, my friend ? Are they grave in their discourse ?”

“As heart could wish,” replied the landlord. “I should take them rather for the most pious and humble—”

“I will see them myself,” interrupted Dry, who began to suspect the landlord. “It is not easy to deceive my eyes.”

But the worthy host contrived to detain his worshipful fellow-townsmen for some five

minutes longer, in order that the guests might finish their meal in peace, by opening a conversation relative to the return of "the poor silly girl, Arrah Neil," as he called her, in regard to whom he had shrewd suspicions that Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, entertained sentiments not quite so rigid as those which his words in the morning might seem to imply.

On this part of their conversation, however, I shall not dwell, as it would be neither very instructive nor very amusing, but will return once more to the parlour of the inn which Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, entered with a staid and stately step, with his two eyes bent upon the ground, as if he were in deep meditation. The younger of the two guests in the parlour lolled in his chair and bit his lip. The elder considered Mr. Dry attentively, but suffered him to enter the room and approach the table, without saying a word. Neither did he make any movement of limb or feature, but remained cold, stiff, and dry, as if his limbs and his

countenance were made of wood. Mr. Dry, however, always recollected that he was a man in authority ; and great success in life, where there is any weakness of character, is sure to produce a confident self-importance, very comfortable to the possessor thereof, though not particularly agreeable to his friends and companions.

As neither of the others uttered a word, then, he began the conversation himself without farther ado.

“I trust we are brethren, sir,” he said, addressing the gentleman whom we have called Randal.

“I trust we are so,” replied the other.

“Ahem !” said Mr. Dry, “my name is Dry, sir—Dry, of Longsoaken.”

“You may be soaked long enough,” murmured the man at the table to himself, not loud enough to be heard — “you may be soaked long enough before you are moistened, Mr. Dry.”

But his companion, who saw his lips move, gave him a grave look and replied to the intruder, "I am happy to hear it, sir. It is a godly name, which I have heard of before. Will you never have done with that beef, Master Barecolt?"

"But this mouthful, but this mouthful," replied the gentleman at the table, "and then I am with you."

"One word before you go," said Mr. Dry; "you seem, sir, a godly and well-disposed man, and I doubt not have been led into the right way; but there is an air of prelatie malignancy about this person at the table."

"You are altogether mistaken, worthy Dry," said the good gentleman who had been paying such devoted attention to the beef; "there is nothing malignant about my nature, and the air you talk of is but a remnant of French manners caught while I was serving our Calvinistic brethren in that poor, benighted land. In me, sir, you behold him whom you may

have heard of—who in the morning preached to the people in the beleaguered city of Rochelle, from the 2nd verse of the 24th chapter of the book of Joshua, ‘Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time;’ and who in the evening led them out to battle, and smote the Philistines hip and thigh. That is to say, broke through the stockade, and defeated two regiments of the guards.”

“I have heard of the deed,” replied Mr. Dry.

“Then you must have heard likewise,” said the gentleman at the table, rising up at full length, and making the intruder a low bow, “of Master Deciduous Barecolt.”

“I think I have, I think I have,” said Mr. Dry.

“Then, again,” cried Barecolt, “when I defended the pass in the Cevennes, with only two godly companions, against the Count de Suza and a hundred and fifty blood-thirsty

papists, you must surely have heard of that exploit."

"I cannot say I have," replied Mr. Dry.

"Then, sir, you are ignorant of the history of Europe," answered the other with a look of high indignation; "for I trust the name of Deciduous Barecolt is known from the mouth of the Elbe to the mouth of the Danube, and will descend to posterity upon the stream of time, only rendered imperishable by that which destroys other things. Good-night, Mr. Dry. Now, Master Randal, I am ready to accompany you. Shall we sing a psalm before we go?"

"No," replied Randal abruptly, and picking up his hat, he led the way out of the room.

The inn was situated near the extremity of the town; and at the distance of about two hundred paces from the door, the two strangers emerged from between the lines of houses, and found themselves among the hedge-rows. Without any hesitation as to the track which

he was to pursue, the younger gentleman mounted a stile to the right and took a path which, crossing the fields, wound gradually up over one slope after another till it reached the brow of the hill on which Bishop's Merton House was placed.

It was a fine clear moonlight night; and, at the distance of about a mile from the mansion, they caught a sight of its wide front extending along the hill, till the wings were concealed by a little wood, behind which, as they walked on, the whole building was speedily lost.

"It is a fine old place," said Barecolt to his companion; "it always puts me in mind of the Escorial."

"More likely puts you in mind of the stocks," said Randal; "for you have both seen and felt the one, and never set eyes upon the other."

"How can you tell that I never saw it?" exclaimed his companion; "you have not had

the dandling of me ever since I was a baby in arms."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Randal; "but I am sure you never have seen it, because you say you have. However, you must either speak truth to-night, or hold your tongue. I did not stop you in your course of gasconade with that round-headed knave at the inn, because I knew that you must void a certain quantity of falsehood in the day, and it was necessary to get rid of it before you came up here; for this young lord is not one to take counterfeit coin."

"The monster!" exclaimed Barecolt; "there is not a more cruel or barbarous creature in the earth than the man who drives from his door all the sweet little children of the imagination which you call lies. He is wanting in all human charity. Give me the generous and confiding soul who believes everything that is said to him, and enjoys the story of a traveller who relates to him wild scenes in

lands he never has visited, just as much as if it was all as true as history—”

“Which is itself a lie,” rejoined the other. “Had this young man’s father been alive, you would have found a person after your own heart. He was a man of vast capabilities of belief. His mind was but a looking-glass, always representing what was before it; his religion was in the last sermon he had heard, his politics in the last broadsheet, his opinions those of his companions for the hour, his taste the newest mode that he had seen. He was the quintessence of an ordinary-minded man. But his son is a very different being.”

Barecolt made no rash promise of abstaining from his favourite amusement, but walked on for about a hundred yards in silence, till suddenly his companion exclaimed, “Do you not see a strange light shining through the wood before us? Hark, there is an alarm-bell!” And hurrying his pace he issued forth from the wood some three hundred yards

farther on, where the cause of the light they had remarked became too visible.

Rising up from one of the flanking towers of the old house, in large white volumes, to the very sky, was a tall column of smoke, spreading out towards the top, while from the building itself poured forth the rushing flame like a huge beacon, illuminating all the country round. Each window in that tower and the neighbouring wing emitted the same blaze; and it was very evident—although a number of persons were seen moving about upon the terrace, engaged apparently in the endeavour to extinguish the fire—that it was making its way rapidly towards the rest of the house.

The two strangers ran as fast as possible to give assistance. But before I pursue their adventures on that night, I must turn to speak of all that had taken place within the mansion of Bishop's Merton during the evening preceding the disaster which I have described.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was in the mansion of Bishop's Merton, one of those delightful old chambers which, like a warm and benevolent heart, have a nook for every one. It was a large wide room with a recess on one side big enough to have formed another room, and a lesser recess at each corner, on the same side, made by two small square turrets, each lighted by its own windows, and containing tables and chairs of its own, so that the studious or the meditative, but not the unsociable, could sit and read, or muse apart, without being actually cut off from the society assembled. The walls were all covered with tapestry, de-

scended through many generations in the same family, and which had covered the walls of a similar chamber in an old castle, partly destroyed during the civil wars of the Roses, and pulled down at the commencement of the reign of Henry the Eighth.

Out from the tapestry, however, after an old fashion, which certainly showed pictures to much greater advantage than when plastered upon the face of the wall, stood a great many portraits of different degrees of art, supported at the lower part by a gilt iron bracket, and upheld in a slightly sloping position by an iron bar at the top. From the cold severe Holbein, to the rich and juicy Rubens, and the poetical Vandyke, all the famous artists of the last two centuries had exercised their pencils in portraying the features of a race which had always been fruitful in beauty; and the history of the changeful mind of those two ages was shadowed forth in the varying costume in which the characters appeared.

Nor is it, let me say, dear reader, in passing, a slight indication of the state of the popular mind that is afforded by the dress of the day. Look at the cavalier in his long floating locks, his silks and velvets, and at the roundhead, in his steeple hat, his straight-cut suit and prim cloak, each with his heavy-hilted sword and large flapping gloves, and say whether Naseby Field and Marston Moor, and all the deeds on either part, do not naturally, and not purely historically, connect themselves with such apparel; and then turn to ourselves, with our straight-cut frock coats, neat close-fitting boots, and other mathematical habiliments, which seem to have been fashioned by the rules and compasses of a Laputan sage, and tell me whether they do not plainly speak of an age of railroads and steamboats.

There, however, stood the pictures of the brave and beautiful of other times, bending down over their once familiar halls, and the doings of their descendants, as the spirits of

the dead may be supposed to gaze upon the actions of the children they have left behind ; and there in the oriel window, just about the time of day at which we commenced this tale, sat a creature, whom those long-gone bold warriors and lovely dames might look upon with pride, and own her of their blood.

It was a lady of some twenty years of age, not very tall, but yet, if anything, above the middle height of women. She was very beautiful, too, in feature, with a skin as white as alabaster, and as smooth, yet with the rose glowing in her cheek, and her arched lips red and full of health.

I have long discovered that it is impossible to paint beauty with the pen ; and, therefore, I will say no more than may be sufficient merely to give the reader some idea of what kind and sort hers was of, more that the harmony which ought always, and generally does, in some degree, exist between the form and mind may be understood, than to draw a picture

of which imagination would still have to fill up half the details. Though her skin, as I have said, was so fair, her hair, her eyebrows, and her eyes were dark, not exactly black—for in them all there was a gleam of sunny warmth which brightened, like the dawn, the deep hue of night. The expression of her countenance was generally gay and cheerful, but varying often, as a heart quickly susceptible of strong feelings, and a mind full of imagination, were affected by the events in which she took part, and the circumstances around her. Youth and health, and bountiful nature, had endued her form with manifold graces, and though her limbs were full and rounded in contour, yet they displayed in every movement lines of exquisite symmetry, and like the child of Joab, she was swift of foot as the wild roe. As is often the case with persons of quick fancy, her mind, though naturally of a cheerful and hopeful bent, was, nevertheless, not unfrequently overshadowed

by a cloud of passing melancholy ; and a look of sadness would occasionally come into her fair face, as if the consciousness which is in most hearts that this world of glittering delusions has its darker scenes, even for those of the brightest fate, made itself painfully felt at times when no apparent cause for grief or apprehension was near. But such shadows passed quickly away, and the general tone of her heart and her expression was, as we have said, bright and sunshiny.

Her father had been a man who took his ideas greatly from those amongst whom he lived. In short, he attributed too much importance to the opinions of his fellow-men. We may attribute too little to them, it is true, and even great men are bound to pay some deference to the deliberate judgment of many ; but it is usually, nay invariably, a sign of weak understanding, to depend for the tone of our own thoughts upon those around. However, as he was thrown into the society of

men who set great value upon accomplishments, such as they were in those days, he had made a point of having his daughter instructed in all the lighter arts of the times. To sing, to dance, to play on various instruments, to speak the two languages most in fashion at the court, French and Italian, with the ease and accent of a native, had seemed to him matters of vast importance; and as she showed every facility in acquiring whatever he desired, he had no cause to be discontented with her progress. She might, perhaps, have been taught to consider such things of much importance too; but she had a mother,—the safeguard of God to our early years. That mother was a woman of a high and noble mind, somewhat stern perhaps and rigid, yet not unkind or unfeeling; and between a parent weak, though possessed of talent, and one keen and powerful in intellect, though not quick or brilliant, it may easily be guessed which gave the strongest impress to the mind

of the child. Thus Annie Walton learned, perhaps, somewhat to undervalue the accomplishments which, to please her father, she acquired, and though she possessed less of the stern, calm, determined character of her mother than her brother Charles, and more of the pliant and easy disposition of her father, yet she inherited a share of high resolution and firm decision, which was requisite, even in a woman, to enable her to encounter the dangers and difficulties of the times in which she lived.

She sat, then, in the oriel window of the hall at Bishop's Merton, reading a page, printed roughly on coarse paper, while now a smile, somewhat saddened, and now a look of anger, somewhat brightened by the half-faded smile, passed over her sweet face, as in one of the broad sheets of the day, which had been left with her a few minutes before by Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, she saw the doings of a parliament, which began by asserting the

rights of the people, and ended by attacking the just prerogatives of the crown—which commenced by opposing tyranny and deceit in the rulers of the land, and ended by far exceeding all the tyranny and deceit it had opposed, and adding the most beastly hypocrisy and violence, fraud, rapine, and cruelty, to the crimes and follies which it had found existing. She read and smiled—she read and sighed—for though her family had taken no part in the deeds of the last twelve months, and though her mother had been through life rather attached to the doctrines of the Presbyterians than their opponents, yet there was something in the cause of the cavaliers, with all their faults, in their very rashness and want of all pretence — something in the cold-blooded hypocrisy and false pretexts of the parliamentarians, which had engaged her sympathies on the losing side, and roused her indignation against the successful.

While she was thus occupied, a horseman

passed rapidly before the window towards the principal door of the house, crossing like a quick bird in its flight ; and casting down the paper, Miss Walton ran out murmuring, " It is Charles !"

There was a large old-fashioned vestibule hung with pikes and arms, corslets and head-pieces, and stags' antlers and hunting horns, and all the implements of real battle, and of the mimic warfare of the chase. The door leading to the terrace stood wide open, with an old servant on either side, and as she bounded forward with the expectation of meeting her brother, with her countenance beaming with pleasure, to greet him on his return, a stranger entered and advanced at once towards her.

Annie Walton's face suddenly became graver, and a blush rose into her cheek ; but the cavalier came forward with a frank and unembarrassed air, walked straight up to her, and took her hand, as if he had been an old friend.

“You thought it was your brother,” he said, with easy grace, saving her all trouble of explanation, “and you are disappointed, Miss Walton. Would that I had a sister to look so joyful on my return to my old halls—but your disappointment will have no long life. Charles Walton will be here ere the world be an hour older; and in the mean time you must show me and my poor beast fair hospitality till the master of the mansion comes himself to tell you more about his friend, Sir Francis Clare.”

He bowed as he thus introduced himself, and Annie Walton, with all courtesy, but a grave air, invited him to the hall where she had been sitting, trying to call to mind the name he had mentioned, amongst those of all her brother’s acquaintances. She could recollect no such person, however, as Sir Francis Clare; and although there was in the frankness of the stranger’s manner something that pleased her, yet she almost thought it too free

in one whom she could not believe to be very intimate with Lord Walton. Yet there was a grace as well as an ease in his demeanour, a tone not easily described, but which can only be acquired by long intimate habits of familiarity with persons of high mind and education, a self-possession, distinct from impudence, which showed her at once that the visitor was not one of the wild and reckless roysterers of the court and army of King Charles, who presumed without merit, and endeavoured to cover vulgarity of spirit with self-confidence.

Leading the way then to the hall, she begged the stranger to be seated. He bowed, and let her take her place, while he remained standing before her, calculating rapidly what was passing in her thoughts, and, to say truth, somewhat struck with the beauty of this cynosure of neighbouring eyes, who, whatever he might have expected to find, went far in loveliness beyond his imagination.

There was a momentary pause while she

thought of what was next to come; but the stranger spoke first. "I must seem very bold, I fear, and somewhat too free, Miss Walton," he said at length, "in thus treating you as an old acquaintance; but the circumstances of these days engender strange habits of rapidity in all our doings. Rough times abridge ceremonies, and besides, when our thoughts are familiar even with those whom we have never met, a sort of one-sided friendship grows up in our breast towards them which makes us forget that it is not reciprocal. I have so often heard your brother talk of you, so often conversed with him of you, that I may think myself lucky that at our first meeting I did not offend you by calling you Annie."

"It would have surprised more than offended," replied his fair companion with a smile; "but Charles will, I trust, soon make us better acquainted. Have you seen him lately?"

"Not for five years," answered Sir Francis Clare; "and yet, sweet lady, know more of

his proceedings than you do, who parted from him but a week ago—not that he is deep-dyed in plots and conspiracies kept from his sister's ear; but simply because he wrote to me yesterday one of his brief but comprehensive notes, telling me what he purposed, and giving me a rendezvous here to-day, which I, with my usual impatience, have run before by near an hour. I heard of him, too, as I came along, and though I found that I should be before him, yet I hurried on—not to surprise his sister all alone, and make her wonder what rash man had come to visit her, believe me.”

“Such an object were little worth the spur, sir,” replied the lady, laughing; “but if I understand you right, your friendship with my brother must have begun when he was in France.”

“Long before that,” replied the cavalier; “but when last I parted with him he was in Italy, where he left me to return to his own house. We bade each other farewell under

the Loggia de Lanzi, in the fair town of Florence."

"Oh, how I long to see that place!" cried Annie Walton—"it is one of the dreams of my imagination which, perhaps, may never be realized."

"Few dreams of the imagination ever are," answered her companion. "He who gives himself up to fancy is like a man led by a child, who tells him of all the wonderful things that he will show him in the garden of the world, and when he comes to see the marvels, he finds them but May blossoms and briar roses, that fade as soon as gathered, and leave a bunch of thorns in his hand."

Annie Walton raised her eyes to the stranger's brow, and gazed at the rich floating hair that covered it, to see if she could trace any of the marks of that age which has proved the world and discovered its delusions. But all was youthful and open; there was nothing grey or grave, and she replied—

“You speak sadly of this earth and its enjoyments, sir ; and yet I would not part with fancy and all her pleasant deceits if I could.”

“Never! never!” cried Sir Francis Clare, eagerly. “If I may use a paradox, sweet lady, the deceits of reality are ten times more dangerous than those of imagination. If all things are delusions except the hopes of a higher and a holier world, let us keep the pleasant delusions at least, and they are those of fancy—but what have we here?—the last news from London.”

“The reply of the parliament to the king’s message,” answered the lady ; “and thirty-one good reasons for rejecting his majesty’s offers, with the godly and soul-saving declaration of several pious men concerning popery and prelacy.”

The stranger laughed.

“How easy is it,” he cried, “to cover gross treason, not only to king but country, with fair pretexts of freedom, or to hide what they

themselves call the most carnal self-seeking, with the garb of religious zeal, and to give the fairest names to the blackest passions of our nature! 'Tis a trite remark, but one that forces itself upon us every day; and yet this is the trade that succeeds in the world, so that gross deceit raises itself to high places, and sits in purple and fine linen, while honesty is left to beg her bread, and plain truth stands shivering in a ragged blanket."

"But I should think such bare-faced hypocrisy as this," answered the lady, "would deceive no one. People may pretend to believe it, but it must be mere affectation, as bad as the hypocrisy itself."

"Your pardon, madam," replied the cavalier; "there never yet was falsehood so open and impudent, which, often repeated and told with a smooth face, would not find many to give it ready credence. Not a day passes but we see some monstrous lie, decked out with strong assurances of sincerity and zeal, pass current

with the multitude. Oh, lady, there is an appetite for falsehood in this world that makes the many-headed monster gorge the food, however dirty, and, like a hungry dog, pluck morsels from the very kennel. Yet there is some truth, too, in what these people say. I am not one to cover them with bad names; for, alas! however wrong they may be now, the king put himself in fault at first. The man who suffers himself to be compelled to do justice to others, will, some time or another, have to compel others to do justice to him; and he who has abandoned his friends in time of need, will surely have to lament their loss when he has to struggle with enemies.”

“And has the king done this?” asked Annie Walton.

“Strafford, Strafford,” said the cavalier, with a melancholy shake of the head—“bold, firm-hearted, gallant Strafford. That fatal error was the downfall of King Charles. Where is the hand that now shall raise him,

up ? Lady, when a general finds himself in a town about to be besieged by an enemy, he strengthens his fortifications and throws down all the scattered houses and indefensible suburbs that might give the foes advantage in their approach ; but the king pursued a different course : he threw down his defences, and maintained all the suburbs and weak points.— But this is sorry conversation for a lady’s ear,” he continued ; “ what a fair scene does this window show. In riding through the low ground I did not mark all the beauty round me.”

“ It is indeed as fine a view as any in the country round,” replied Annie Walton ; “ and often when I feel sad at heart, I come and gaze out here, and seem to find comfort and confidence from the sight.”

“ And are you ever sad at heart ?” asked Sir Francis Clare, with a smile.

“ Not very often, it is true,” she answered ; “ but still in the present disturbed state of the

country, which is like one of those dark storms through which one can see no glimpse of coming sunshine, I cannot but sometimes feel fears and apprehensions—not for myself, indeed, for no one would hurt a woman, I suppose; but for my brother; and when I am thus depressed I need the sight of things which speak with a voice not to be misunderstood, of God's power and His goodness too, to show me that though the tempest may rage for a time, it will give place to brighter hours at last, and perhaps, in itself, work benefit, even while it seems destined to destroy."

"Oh, may you feel ever thus," cried the cavalier, eagerly; "for it was such faith brought back the dove to the ark at length. Yet often when we see a world of roaring waters round us, and destruction on every side, the heart will sink, and trust and confidence give way for a time. But still," he added, laughing, "I am not one to entertain many sombre thoughts; and if the gay companions of

thoughtless hours could know with what sad ideas I have entertained a fair lady, they would recommend me a Geneva skull-cap, and a straight black cloak. I can assure you, our talk in the court is much less solemn. Except for an hour in the morning, when we speak soberly of war and policy, as men take a walk after breakfast for a good digestion, our days pass much in the consideration of lace collars, the fashion of sword knots, and of how to get them. The world, I believe, and most of the things in it, are not worth the waste of five minutes' heavy thought; and, weighed in a just balance, perhaps, a madrigal and a charge of horse, a sonnet of tiffany poetry, and the plan of a campaign, are matters much more nearly of the same importance than we think. But there comes your brother, or I am mistaken."

"Yes, yes!" cried the lady gladly, gazing out of the open window into the valley, along which a small party of horsemen were riding :

“ he will be here directly ;” and she and her companion, whose conversation had greatly won upon her, continued watching the progress of the young Lord Walton, as he rode rapidly along the valley, till he was hid behind the high-wooded banks, near which, as we have already related, he paused to hold a short conversation with poor Arrah Neil. They wondered what detained him so long under the trees ; but after a brief pause, he appeared again, and in a few minutes he sprang from his horse at the hall-door.

CHAPTER IV.

“HA, Francis!” exclaimed Lord Walton, grasping the cavalier’s hand with warm eagerness, as soon as he had received the embrace of his sister, “are you here before me? You must have used the spur from Worcester, if your letter left the good town before you.”

“I have used the spur, Charles,” replied his friend, “on purpose to outrun you, and introduce myself to this fair lady without your assistance. You know I always was the most impatient of mortals, and strange, I fear, she thought me; for I could plainly see that she had never heard the name of Francis Clare before.” He spoke the last words with a gay laugh, and some emphasis.

“Perhaps not,” answered Lord Walton, with a grave smile; “but she must know you now, Francis, as one of her brother’s dearest and oldest friends. However, I must send her away from us for a minute, for I have a task for her, sad, but pleasing to perform. I just now found poor Arrah Neil, dear Annie,” he continued; “she was sitting by the Bishop’s Well, dark and sorrowful, as well she may be. The poor old man, Neil, is dead. They dragged him as far as Devizes, where the lamp that has burned so faintly for the last two years went out, and the poor girl has found her way back hither. Something must be done for her, Annie; and till we can settle what, she must stay here. I left Langan with her to bring her up; so see to her comfort, sister, for by her dress I think they must have robbed her by the way.”

“Poor child!” cried Anne Walton. “I was sure the old man would die. Can these be really Christians, Charles; for a few rash

words, spoken in haste, to take a man of seventy from his sickbed ?”

“ His words meant more than they seemed, Annie,” answered her brother ; “ at least so I gather from their answer to my application for his release : but see to her comfort, dear girl, and then come back to us, for the poor thing spoke of some evil hanging over me here ; and, though at times so strange, I have often remarked she speaks not lightly.”

“ No, indeed, Charles,” replied his sister, with an anxious look. “ Evil hanging over you ? What can she mean ?”

“ I know not, Annie,” replied Lord Walton. “ Nothing has happened to cause you alarm, has there ?”

“ Nothing,” she answered. “ Dry, of Longsoaken, was here this morning, but he was all smoothness and civility.”

“ That looks ill,” said Sir Francis Clare. “ He must be a roundhead by his name ; and

whenever they speak smoothly, beware of the serpent in the grass."

"And he is a serpent, if ever the earth produced one," answered Lord Walton, thoughtfully. "Did he speak smoothly and civilly?—So, so. What was the object of his visit, Annie—or had he any apparent object?"

"Purely, it seemed," replied Miss Walton, "to ask after my health, during what he called your long absence. I told him your absence had not been long—only a week; and that you had already concluded your business with the committee, and would return to-day. So then he left that paper with me, which he said must be marrow and fatness to all well-disposed noblemen like yourself. But, indeed, he seemed well affected towards you, and said, I now recollect, something about the people of Bishop's Merton having encroached upon your land at Sarham, which he should be happy to set right for you, and which he could do, if you pleased, without your name

appearing in the matter, so as not to affect your popularity with the God-fearing people of the place."

"Where did he learn I ever feared to have my name appear in any act I did?" asked Charles Walton, proudly. "'Tis but such low and creeping things as he is, who do things they dare not own. He had some other object—this is all a pretence! But go, dear Annie, there is Langan with the poor girl; perhaps she will tell you more than she would say to me—but do not press her, Annie, if she be unwilling.—And now, Francis," he continued, as his sister left the room, "first, welcome, after so long an absence; next, what is this serious business that you would speak with me upon?"

"Faith, but a little matter as this world goes," replied his friend; "and yet one which would have been considered mighty some ten years ago. Now men draw two straws for the longest, or toss up a crown-piece to know

which party they will choose, whether they will fight for their rightful king or his rebel parliament——”

“Not quite so, Francis,” replied Charles Walton, seriously: “with me, at least, the question would ever be a serious one—whether I should draw my sword for the representatives of the people of England, when fighting for the just liberties of the land, or for a sovereign who has somewhat infringed them?—even if the case stood exactly as the parliament puts it, but——

“I am glad you have added those words, Charles,” interrupted the cavalier: “for on them hangs all the rest. The king is willing to do ample justice to all men. Granted that he has committed faults—and who has greater cause to complain than I have?—granted that he has had bad advisers—granted that he sacrificed Strafford——”

“A terrible fault indeed,” replied Lord Walton.

“Granted that his exactions were unjust—ship-money a breach of the best and soundest laws—the star-chamber an iniquitous tyranny; still these errors were a part of his inheritance, and perhaps if we looked closely, we should find that our fathers who suffered, and by suffering encouraged such things, who fawned upon the hand that pressed them to the ground, who bowed readily to tyranny whenever it stretched forth its rod, have as great a share of the responsibility as he has who only used the powers transmitted to him by his predecessors. But I come not to discuss such questions, Charles Walton. The king has committed errors; he grieves for them, he is ready to repair them—he has done all that man can do to remedy evils past, and provide security against their recurrence. He calls upon every loyal subject to aid him, not only in defending the throne itself, but the country, from those who would evidently shake its constitution to the

ground, overthrow its best institutions, and establish, if not the reign of anarchy, the rule of a many-headed monster, which will, if tolerated, end in a despotism more terrible than any we have yet seen within the land. And will Charles Walton, gallant and chivalrous as he is known to be—will he refuse to obey that call? Or is he, who was wont to be so clear sighted and so keen, one of those who believe that the pretences of the parliament are true—that they seek but to reduce the power of the crown within due limits, to lop the prerogative of those branches that bore oppression, and secure the freedom of the people, yet leave the stability of the throne? Or does he approve of hypocritical pretexts even to gain just ends? No, no! I know him better.”

“Certainly,” replied the young nobleman; “I neither approve the practices, nor believe the pretences of the parliament. But I have hitherto trusted, my dear friend, though they

may be now intoxicated with authority, the exercise of which is new to them, and in their pride may encroach upon both the prerogative of the crown and the liberty of the subject—for I can conceive a parliament to become a more terrible tyrant than even a monarch—yet I say, I have trusted that the wiser and the better members of that body will recover from the drunkenness that some have felt, and the fears that have affected others ; and that, at all events, if any dangerous and outrageous exercise of power should take place, those who have never favoured the arbitrary use of the royal prerogative, or the licentious exactions of the commons, may have sufficient weight to counterbalance that authority which is but delegated by the people, and which the people can again resume.”

“ Fatal confidence,” exclaimed the cavalier, with a dark and melancholy look, “ which never has been, never will be justified ! Yet it is one that in all civil strifes many wise and

many good men have entertained, till they discovered, when too late, how cruelly they had deceived themselves; till, hanging between two parties and supporting neither, they saw the one sink lower and lower, and the other, which perhaps they most condemned, rise into power, and go on in evil; and then, when they strove to arrest the course of wrong, found themselves either carried away by the current and involved in wickedness they would fain have opposed, or sunk beneath the torrent with those who endeavoured to divert it while it was yet feeble, and whose efforts they might have rendered successful, had they joined therein in time. Let me tell you, Charles, that in the history of all contentions such as those that now shake the land, there is a time when the balance of sincerity and right is clearly on one side, and that it is then true lovers of their country should step in with their whole strength to turn the balance of power on that side also.

There is such a time believe me ; and now is the moment !”

“ Perhaps it is,” answered Lord Walton, thoughtfully. “ I said, my friend, that I had hitherto felt the impressions I described. I did not deny that they are somewhat shaken, perhaps more than I believe.”

“ When that time has come,” continued the cavalier, without appearing to mark his reply, “ it is the duty of every man to ask himself, on which side is now the right ? on which side is now the danger ? and, casting away the memory of old faults and old grievances, to choose boldly and conscientiously between the two. If he choose well, it will be easy for him at any after time to guard against a renewal of errors on the part of those whom he supports ; but if, from any fear of such a renewal, he turn to the side which he knows to be acting amiss, he commits himself for ever to the errors he supports, and can never hope to stop their course, or avert their con-

sequences. What I ask you then to do is,—to choose! I say not, join the king: I say not, oppose the parliament: I merely say, lay your hand upon your heart, forgetting mistakes that are past; ask yourself, which is now right, and which is now wrong; and choose as your conscience may direct.”

Lord Walton paused for a few moments in deep thought; then giving his hand to his friend, he said, “I will! Ask me no more at present, Francis; nor inquire whether, when I say *I will*, I might not say *I have*. Resolutions such as these had better be spoken of as little as possible till they can be executed. Stay till to-morrow morning: then back to the king. Your further presence here might be dangerous to yourself, and hurtful to your cause. And now to other things: how long had you been here before I came?”

“Long enough to find it a dangerous abode, good friend,” replied the cavalier. “In truth, Walton, if you have not got an angel here, you

have what is more like one than anything my eyes have yet seen."

"Oh! I know your gallant speeches," answered Charles Walton, with a laugh, his face losing the grave cast which was habitual to it, and brightening with cheerful light; "but Annie is well accustomed to hear sweet things, and I fear not the effect of high-flown southern compliments on her little heart, which, however gentle, is firm enough to stand a longer siege than any you will have time to give it. But," he added, while his brow grew sad again, "I will own to you, Francis, it is her future fate that in these troublous times half makes a coward of me; and, though knowing what is right, that will I do; yet there is a hesitating fear within me, lest, in the course I am destined to pursue, I may bring down sorrow and misfortune upon that bright, kind being, who has been ever my sunshine and my hope."

"I can feel that it must be so, Charles,"

replied his friend, gravely. "Had I a sister such as that, it would be so with me. Therein I can do little to console, and perhaps less to counsel or to help you. But yet, Charles Walton, you know I am something of the ancient knight: my sword and my heart for my king and my fair lady; and without any rash promising of love for one whom I have only known an hour,—such as one-half of our gay courtiers would make,—I give you my word, that whatever befalls you, so long as life and strength last, my next thought, after my duty to God and my sovereign, shall be to care for the protection and safety of my friend's sister."

Lord Walton smiled, with a look in which pleasure and grief were strangely blended, but he replied nothing, merely once more pressing Clare's hand.

"Why do you smile, Charles?" asked the cavalier. "Is it that you think me too young, too light, too gay, to take such a task upon

myself? My honour, my regard, you do not doubt, I know; and as for the rest, these are days when the old times of chivalry must revive, or the sun will set in darkness indeed; and in those ancient periods men, young as I am, have, with a holy devotion, been the safeguards and protectors of dames well nigh as fair and bright as this, if we may believe the sales we read."

"But those tales still ended in a marriage, Francis," said Lord Walton.

"Well there let it!" cried the cavalier, gaily. "Here I dedicate my heart and sword to her. Those bright eyes shall be my load-stars on the road to glory, her smile give double vigour to my arm, and fresh sharpness to my lance. There, Walton, is not that the true Orlando? But seriously, what meant your somewhat rueful smile just now? Was it that you thought the gay youth of former days but little fit to supply a brother's place in time of need; or, perhaps, still less, to take a

husband's duties on him, if fate and circumstances should draw your sister's heart towards him? But let me tell you, Charles, that half of the lightness was the cover of deep and painful thoughts; and, besides, these are times that make even the thoughtless think; and when I buckled me to the cause I serve, I cast away and left in foreign lands all but the higher purposes of the heart."

"No, no, Francis," replied Lord Walton, interrupting him; "it was neither doubt, nor fear, nor mockery, that made me smile. You do not suppose that, did I not know and see all that is noble and generous in your nature, and bright and keen in your mind, I would not have taken you to my heart as I have done. That there might be some weeds in the garden I will not deny; but they were only such as an hour's labour would pluck out with ease, or such as would wither away under the first hot sun, and leave the flowers and fruit behind uninjured. I smiled but to remember

that some five years ago, when we were both in happier days than these, I often thought that I would gladly give my Annie to my early friend, but little dreamed that times might come when he himself would offer, ere he had seen her twice, to be her defender and protector in case of her brother's death : and who shall say, Francis, how soon such loss may call for such support ? But here she comes again ; let us say no more of this ; but I thank you, thank you from my heart for all you promise. I know right well that promise will be kept, if it cost your last drop of blood."

The faces of both gentlemen were grave when Annie Walton joined them, and on hers, too, there were traces of some tears.

"Poor Arrah Neil !" she said, "hers indeed has been a hard fate. She has made me weep with the tale of the old man's sufferings, so mildly and so sweetly did she tell it. But I could obtain no further information in regard

to the danger she apprehended might befall you, Charles; and I cannot but think that her words were spoken in one of those strange, dreamy moods, that sometimes fall upon her."

"I think so too," answered Lord Walton; "at least it may be so. Where have you lodged her, Annie?"

"She is with good Dame Rachael now," answered his sister; "but to-night she is to have the little room near the west tower, and to-morrow you must tell me more of your plans for her, Charles."

"I will, I will," replied Lord Walton, "to-morrow;—ay, to-morrow—" and he fell into thought, without concluding the sentence.

The evening passed more cheerfully than the conversation which has been detailed seemed to promise. All were anxious to snatch a few hours from the gloomy thoughts that hung over the times, and few allusions were made to the circumstances of the day; but any other subject, which minds full of

rich stores could produce, was chosen, as if to exclude more sombre topics. From time to time, indeed, both Annie Walton and their new companion would for a moment or two look grave and sad, as some passing cloud of thought swept over them ; but the young lord, whose power over himself was great, kept the same even tenor, not gay, for such was not his disposition ; not gloomy or meditative, for he did not choose to be so, but calm and easy, conversing without apparent effort on a thousand varied things, and never for an instant showing the least absence or forgetfulness. Yet, perhaps, all felt that there were dangers and disasters abroad on every side, though they sat there as a cheerful party, with the windows of the heart closed against the storm that raged without.

There was but one moment when a shadow seemed to fall upon all, and that too was produced by a song. Charles Walton had asked his sister to sing before they parted for the

night; and after some thought, seeking in vain for a livelier strain, she chose—perhaps from the irrepressible anxieties of her own heart—a little ballad, which had been a favourite of her mother's, to the following effect:—

THE SONG.

“Hope sung a song of future years,
Replete with sunny hours;
When present sorrow's dew-like tears,
Should all be hid in flowers.

“But Memory backward turned her eyes,
And taught the heart to fear
More stormy clouds, more angry skies,
With each succeeding year.

“But still Hope sung, as by that voice
Such warnings sad were given,
In louder strains bade youth rejoice,
And age look on to heaven.”

Each kept silence for a minute or two after the song was done, and each gave a sigh; but

then the cavalier would fain have persuaded Miss Walton to sing again, for her voice was one of those, full of native music, which the ear longs for when once heard, as the weary heart of manhood thirsts to taste again the fearless joys of infancy. But she declined, saying she was somewhat weary ; and shortly after the little party separated for the night.

Charles Walton shook his friend's hand warmly as they parted, at a yet early hour, and adding to the good-night, "We will speak more before you go to-morrow," he himself retired to his chamber to pass several hours in meditation ere he lay down to rest.

As soon as he was alone, the young lord sent away a servant who was waiting for him, and then leaned his head upon his hand for some ten minutes without moving. At length he raised his eyes to a heavy sword that hung above the old carved mantel-piece, rose, took it down, drew it from the sheath, and gazed upon the blade. There were some dents and

notches in the edge ; and saying in a low tone, “ It has done good service—it may do more,” he thrust it back again, and hung it up as before.

“ I will go to my cabinet and write two lines to the king,” he added, after a short pause ; but then again he stopped, and meditated, murmuring, “ no, it were better not to write ; such documents are dangerous. I will send a message. I see they suspect me already. It were as well to destroy the commission and those other papers—and, if at all, at once. I will do it now.—What is the matter ?” he continued, as some one knocked at the door.

“ Charles, Charles,” cried his sister, coming into the room ; and as he sprang to meet her, he saw that her face was very pale.

“ There is a terrible smoke,” she exclaimed, “ and a rushing sound like fire.”

“ Where, where ?” asked her brother, eagerly hurrying towards the door.

“In the corridor, beyond my room,” answered Annie, “towards the west wing. Oh, bid them ring the alarm-bell!”

“On no account, on no account!” cried her brother, darting out. “Call all the servants, Annie. Run, Alice,” he continued to one of his sister’s maids, who had followed her, pale and trembling, “send Hugh and Roger here, and then call the rest.—Smoke, indeed! There is fire somewhere! Quick, girl, quick! Go back, my Annie, and dress yourself again. I will soon tell you more.” And thus saying, he hurried on through the wide gallery, upon which the door of his bed-room opened, and then along the corridor beyond.

The smoke grew thicker at each step he took; the crackling and rushing sound of fire soon became audible, and then a fitful flash broke across the obscurity, like that of a signal-gun seen through a heavy mist.

In a minute he was at a large door which closed the end of the corridor, and through

the neighbouring window he could see the projection of one of the flanking towers, with a small loop-hole showing a red glare within.

“Here is the fire,” he cried, “in my own cabinet! How can this have happened?” and he laid his hand upon the latch. The door was locked. He tried to turn the key, but it was embarrassed. “Bring me an axe!” he exclaimed, hearing some of the servants following him rapidly. “Bring me an axe directly!—quick, quick!—all the papers will be burned,” and again he tried to turn the key.

“The charter chests were removed, my lord, to the next room,” said the good servant Langan. “I moved them myself by your own order, just before we went, that the floor might be repaired.”

The young lord laid his hand upon his brow for an instant, and then said, “Let the rest perish then!—It is no matter;” and just as he spoke, the alarm-bell rang loud and long.

“What fool has done that?” exclaimed

Charles Walton. "Ah! Francis, is that you?" he continued, speaking to Sir Francis Clare, who was up and following him fully dressed, "A word in your ear: mount your horse quickly and begone," he whispered. "We shall have all the country on us in half an hour. See, there are some twenty on the terrace already. Langan, here—go the round with this gentleman to the stables by the back way, then through the wood with him till he is beyond the grounds. Francis, say I am determined!" he added again, lowering his voice. "You shall see me soon.—Away, away, good friend! You know not the people here."

By this time servants were hurrying up with buckets of water, and with axes to break down the door; but before he suffered that to be done, Lord Walton turned to one of those behind, saying, "See to poor Arrah Neil; she is in the chamber just beneath us. Take her to your lady's room. Now, Roger, you and

Dick move out the chests from the place where Langan says he put them. Take them down to the terrace; but set some one to watch them. Hark! there is something fallen within."

"The great case of books, my lord, by the sound," said one of the men.

"Now give me an axe," cried the young nobleman, and with a few blows he dashed the lock off the door, and pushed it open, bidding the men throw in the water as he did so.

Out burst the flames and smoke, however, as soon as the obstruction was removed, with such fury, that all were forced to run back; and as it somewhat cleared away, the frightful scene of destruction that the interior of the tower displayed, too plainly showed there was no possibility left of saving that part of the building.

"Now, my good men," cried the young lord, "let as many as can find buckets, keep

pouring on the water. The others help me to cut away the woodwork between the tower and the rest. Some of you run up to the corridor above, break down the panelling, and throw it back, away from the flames. Fear not, but at all risks cut off the tower from the rest of the house. Call some of those men up from below. Why do they stand idle there ?”

The scene of hurry and confusion that succeeded can be imagined by those who have witnessed the consternation produced by a fire in a rural district, where few of those means and appliances which in great towns exist in plenty, but often are found ineffectual even there, are to be met with at all. To prevent the flames from extending to the rest of that wing was found impossible, notwithstanding all the efforts of the noble master of the mansion, and the strenuous exertions of his servants, who speedily recovered from the first confusion of surprise, and recollected the old mili-

tary habits which they had acquired in former days. The tenantry, too, who flocked up at the sound of the alarm-bell, gave eager but not very efficient help, as well as a number of the townsfolk ; but still the fire gained ground, extended from the tower to the rooms in the wing, ran along the cornices, caught the beams, and threatened the whole building with destruction, when a tall, grave stranger, in a black cloak and hat walked calmly up to Lord Walton, who had come down to the terrace to give directions to the people below, and said in a low tone—

“A few pounds of gunpowder, my lord, and a linen bag laid above that doorway, and under the coping-stone, will separate the fire from the building. The stone passage cuts it off below ; there is but a narrow gallery above, and if you can but break up the corridor—”

“I see ! I see !” cried Lord Walton. “Thanks, sir, thanks. Run, Hugh, to the armoury ; you will find some powder there.”

“I beg, sir, that I may be permitted to make the *saucisson*,” cried a tall man in flaunting apparel. “At the celebrated siege of Rochelle I constructed the famous petard where-with we blew in the—”

“I thank you, sir,” replied the master of the mansion, looking at the person who addressed him from head to foot with a quick but marking gaze, “I will make it myself;” and without farther notice he proceeded to give the necessary orders, and to take precautions both to insure the safety of all persons near, and to guard the building as much as possible from damage by the explosion.

When all was ready he went into the house to bring his sister forth, lest by any chance the rooms in which she had hitherto remained should be shaken more than he expected; and then, after having placed her at a distance, he himself fired the train, which being unconfined, except at one part, carried the flame in an instant to the bag of powder, causing it to

explode with a tremendous roar. A quantity of brick-work was thrown into the air; the gallery above fell in the moment after; and then, after a short pause, a tall, neighbouring tower between the place where the powder had taken effect, and that where the fire was raging, bulged out about half way up, and then rushed down, strewing the terrace with a mass of broken ruins.

In the anxiety and excitement of the moment, Lord Walton had observed little but what was passing immediately before him; but as he marked the effect and was turning round to look for his sister, in order to tell her that the rest of the mansion was saved, the stranger in black who had spoken to him before, once more addressed him in a low voice, saying—

“You had better look to those chests, my lord; Colonel Thistleton is eyeing them somewhat curiously. As for me, I will wish you good-night; I love not the neighbourhood of

parliamentary commissioners; but if you want good help at need, which perhaps may be the case soon, you have only to send a trusty servant to inquire for Martin Randal at Waterbourne, ten miles hence, and you will have fifty troopers with you in two hours."

"I understand! I understand, major," replied Lord Walton. "God speed you, with my best thanks.—Colonel Thistleton! What came he here for?"

"No good," replied Randal, walking away and beckoning to his tall companion, who followed him with a pompous stride, while Lord Walton turned towards the spot to which he had directed his attention. He there perceived, for the first time, three men on horseback, and one who had dismounted and was speaking with a servant who had been placed to watch the two large chests of papers which had been removed from the wing of the building.

As Lord Walton gazed at him, he stooped

down once more to look at the chests with a curious and inquiring eye ; and striding up to him at once, the young nobleman demanded, in a stern tone—

“Who are you, sir ? and what do you want with those cases ?”

“My name, my lord, is Thistleton,” replied the other ; “a poor colonel, by the permission of Providence, in the service of the parliament of England ; and when matters are a little more composed, I will inform your lordship, as my errand is with you, what excited my curiosity in regard to these cumbrous packages.”

“Oh! Colonel Thistleton! That is a different affair,” answered Lord Walton. “As soon as I have ascertained that all further danger of the fire spreading is past, I will have the honour of entertaining you, as far as my poor house, half destroyed as it is, will admit.”

The parliamentary colonel bowed gravely

and the young nobleman then proceeded to give further directions to his people, mingling with commands respecting the fire and the security of the rest of the mansion, sundry orders spoken in a low tone to those servants on whom he could most rely, and to some of his principal tenants.

When he had assured himself that all was safe, and had set a watch, he returned to his sister's side, and led her back to the house, whispering as he went—

“Keep two of your maids with you in your chamber to-night, Annie. See to poor Arrah Neil; and at dawn to-morrow, dear girl, make preparations for a journey. Ask no questions, sweet sister, but pack up all that you most value—all trinkets, jewels, gold and silver, for we may, perhaps, have to go far.”

Annie Walton gazed at him with a look of sorrowful, half-bewildered inquiry; but he added—“I cannot explain now, dear one; I will tell you more to-morrow;” and she fol-

lowed him silently into the house, where he left her, and at once went back to show as much courtesy to Colonel Thistleton and his companions as the feelings of his heart would permit.

CHAPTER V.

"THIS is a lamentable and very sad visitation, my lord," said Colonel Thistleton, as soon as he was seated with two companions in the large room we have before described.

"It is indeed, colonel," replied Lord Walton, "and will cost me at least ten thousand pounds to repair; so that I hope you have not come for anything like a benevolence, such as our kings of old used sometimes to levy upon their subjects, for I could ill spare one to the honourable house just now——Lagan," he continued to the servant who appeared at the door, "have wine and meat set out in the hall. We shall all want refreshment."

“No, my lord,” replied Colonel Thistleton, with some degree of hesitation; “the houses of parliament resort to no illegal and unjustifiable acts of taxation. Labouring but for the defence of themselves, of the king’s person, and the liberty and laws of the kingdom, they take care to abide by the true rights and customs of the country; but at the same time, my lord, they think it but proper and necessary, as well for the safety of the state as for the exculpation of persons unjustly accused, to inquire into and examine, either by the judges appointed by law—or by a committee of their own body, where any highly honourable and devout person is subjected to calumny—into all charges of resistance to the authority of the two houses, or of conspiracy for the purpose of levying war and farther endangering the condition of the poor distracted realm.”

The colour somewhat increased in Lord Walton’s cheek, but without pause he replied, gravely—

“ They are quite right, sir; and if, as I gather from what you say, you are come into this part of the country upon such an errand, you will find me very ready and willing to give you every assistance in my power.”

Now the commission which Colonel Thistleton had to perform was of a nature somewhat delicate; for the demeanour of the Walton family, at the first resistance shown to the arbitrary proceedings of the court, had been favourable to the views of general freedom, which were then alone apparent on the side of the parliament; and though it had become evident that the young lord had grown cold as they stretched their pretensions, and had even remonstrated against several of their proceedings, yet his course had not been so decided as to cut off all hope of attaching him to the party favourable to resistance of the royal authority by arms, while the task that the worthy committee-man was charged to execute was one likely to alienate him for

ever, if the grounds for suspicion were found unreasonable. However, he was a skilful man, ever ready to take advantage of opportunity, and he therefore replied—

“ I was quite sure, my lord, that we should find every readiness in your lordship. We have, indeed, the unpleasant duty to perform (which I trust we shall do discreetly), of investigating charges against a number of persons in this country; but as it is advisable that those in whose affection and loyalty we have the utmost confidence, should set an example to others against whom there is just cause of suspicion, it is as well that I should inform your lordship that not long since, at Chippenham, a false and calumnious accusation was made against you to our worthy brother, Dr. Bastwick, here present —— ”

“ Of which I do not credit a word,” added the doctor.

“ Charging you with countenancing the cruel preparations for war made by the king

against his loyal subjects, and with having entered into correspondence with his majesty, and received a commission under his hand to levy horse against the honourable houses.”

He paused, as if for a reply, and Lord Walton, with a frowning brow and flushed cheek, answered—

“ So, sir, I am to suppose, in short, that you have come hither to examine my house, and search for the correspondence you speak of?”

“ Exactly, sir,” replied a less prudent member of the committee named Batten ; but Thistleton cut him short by adding—“ We were perfectly sure that your lordship, whose family have always been godly and well disposed, would rejoice at an opportunity of showing the world how readily you would submit to the authority of parliament, and clear yourself of all false and unjust reproaches.”

“ Should such reproaches against a person

of such a character be listened to for a moment?" asked the young nobleman; "and on my word, gentlemen," he added, "you are somewhat bold men to venture on the task."

"Not so bold as you give us credit for, my lord," replied Batten, taking once more the reply out of Thistleton's mouth; "there is a troop of horse under your park wall."

"Then it seems," rejoined Lord Walton, "that you did not really calculate upon such unresisting submission as you affected to expect at first. I must, of course, yield to force. However," he continued with a smile, "I am certainly not prepared to resist, even if I were willing."

"That want of preparation shows your lordship to be innocent," answered the cautious Thistleton,—“a point upon which I have no doubt. It was judged necessary to institute inquiries into all cases of malignant resistance to the authority of parliament in this country; and it was to meet any opposition in

such instances that the troop of horse was sent, not against your lordship, of whose conduct we are quite sure, though we thought it would show unrighteous partiality if we did not in some way notice the charges made against you —— ”

“ Charges made upon oath, be it remarked,” said Dr. Bastwick.

“ Well, gentlemen,” rejoined Lord Walton, “ it is useless to discuss this question farther. I will even take it for granted that you have due warrant for your proceeding, and merely ask what you intend to do next ?”

“ Why the fact is this, my very good lord,” replied Thistleton; “ the information stated that we should find the papers in question in the west tower, in a chamber used by your lordship as a cabinet or writing room, on the first floor from the ground. Now, I was informed but now, that two large chests which I saw on the terrace without, contained writings of value, which had just been re-

moved from the fire. It would be satisfactory to us to look into those cases."

"Surely not to-night," said the young nobleman.

"I think it would be expedient," said Thistleton.

"It would prevent evil surmises," added Bastwick.

"No time like the present," cried Batten. "The king's commission might be gone before to-morrow."

"The keys, I fear, have been lost in the fire," answered Lord Walton, giving him a look of contempt.

"They will be easily broken open," replied Batten.

"I may not exactly like to have all my papers left open to the world," said the young nobleman, gravely; "but having now clearly ascertained how far the suspicions of the parliament really go, I will make no farther objection. But I give you all notice, that I

protest against this act; and that when next I take my place amongst the peers of England, I will move for an inquiry into the whole proceeding — Without there, bring in those cases of papers, and some instrument for forcing open the locks." Thus saying, he rose and, turning to the window, looked out upon the terrace, which was still partially illuminated by the fitful glare of the decaying fire in the tower.

In a few minutes four stout servants appeared carrying in the chests, and having received orders to break them open, soon laid the contents bare before the eager eyes of the parliamentary commissioners. Great, however, was their disappointment to perceive nothing on the top but old deeds and parchments, with many a waxen seal pendent from its broad ribbon. They were not so easily satisfied, however, and proceeded to turn out the whole contents, strewing the floor of the saloon with yellow papers, while Lord Walton

spoke a few words to Langan, who left the room.

“Well, gentlemen, are you satisfied?” asked the young nobleman at length, when the bottom of each case was laid bare. “If so, the servants shall replace the papers, and we will to supper.”

The committee whispered together for a moment ere they replied, but Lord Walton could catch the words “No, no! not now—To-morrow at daybreak—There has evidently been no preparation.—Have up the troop by that time,” and other broken sentences, which evidently showed him that farther proceedings were in contemplation.

“We will, my lord, put off any further perquisitions till to-morrow,” Colonel Thistleton replied at length, “upon your lordship pledging us your word of honour that you will not leave the house, nor send out of it any paper of any kind or sort whatsoever.”

“I shall most assuredly leave the house,”

replied Lord Walton, "for I am going in five minutes to assure myself that the fire will spread no farther. But if you mean that I am not to absent myself, I have no intention of so doing, and will promise to stay and entertain my unexpected guests as befits their quality and commission : nor will I send hence or make away with any paper, from the warrant of array directed by Henry II. to my ancestor, down to the cellar-book of the old butler ; so now, sirs, to supper ; and let us forget for the time all that is unpleasant in our meeting. The day will come, and that before the world is a week older, when I will deal with this matter in the proper place and in the proper manner."

"Be that as you please, my lord," replied Thistleton : "we doubt not we shall be justified. Myself and Dr. Bastwick will in the mean time gladly accept your hospitality. Captain Batten, however, may be wanted with his troop."

“Nay!” cried the young lord, “it were a pity to deprive yourselves of one of your most able and active members. If Captain Batten have any orders to give, he can send them in writing. There lie paper and pens, and I remarked that he had a trooper without. My wine is good, gentlemen, and venison is yet in season.”

“It will do as well to write,” said Batten, who, always ready to take his part in all that was unpleasant, was not without inclination to share in things more agreeable; and proceeding to the writing table in the window, he had soon concocted a hasty note, which he carried out himself, while the rest, with the owner of the mansion, proceeded to the eating-hall.

When the meal was over—and the commissioners did not spare it—Lord Walton ordered them to be conducted to the rooms prepared for them, and took leave, saying—
“To-morrow, gentlemen, at five, if you please,

we will proceed to further business. In the mean while, good-night.”

The beds were soft and downy, the guests of Lord Walton tired with the fatigues of the preceding day, and it was somewhat later than the hour appointed when the members of the committee rose; and then, on looking forth from his window, Captain Batten was surprised and disappointed not to see his troop of horse drawn up in the park, as he had ordered them to muster there by half-past four. His two companions were down before him; and he found them, with the noble owner of the mansion, in the hall. Lord Walton immediately signified in a grave tone that it would be better to proceed on their search; but the task was sooner begun than ended, for Bishop's Merton House, even in its dismembered state, was not easily examined from one end to the other. Room after room was ransacked, every article of furniture which could be supposed to conceal papers was sub-

jected to the perquisitions of the three commissioners; and it must be recollected that, in those days, people had not multiplied the luxuries and conveniences of life to such a degree as scarcely to be able to turn amidst the crowd of superfluities. Still nothing was discovered; for Lord Walton, though young, was a man of regular habits, and his papers were not all scattered over his dwelling, but gathered regularly into one repository.

At length Colonel Thistleton, after having twice passed through the corridor and gallery, pointed to a door in the former, saying—"We have omitted that room several times, my lord. It may be necessary that we examine there, merely for the sake of making our task complete. You will understand me clearly, my most honourable friend, that I am perfectly satisfied, and indeed was so from the first; but we must be enabled to say that we have not left any part of the mansion unseen."

The young nobleman heard him to the end, and then replied gravely—

“Those are my sister’s apartments, sir.”

“Nevertheless, my lord,” answered Dr. Bastwick——

But Lord Walton cut him short, with a frowning brow and a flushed cheek.

“There is no nevertheless, sir,” he said. “Those are my sister’s apartments—that is enough : let me see the man that dares wag a foot towards them.”

“Nay, my good lord,” cried Thistleton, in a mild and deprecating tone, “we mean no offence. If the lady sleep we can wait her waking. We need not go in now.”

“Nor now, nor never, sir,” answered the young nobleman sternly. “There are no papers of mine there, of that I pledge my honour. If that satisfies you, well.”

“But it does not, sir,” cried Batten.

“Then that is well also,” answered Lord Walton, turning away with a look of scorn.

Thistleton spoke a word to his two companions, and then followed the young nobleman, exclaiming—

“My lord, my lord!”

“You speak loud, sir,” rejoined Charles Walton, walking on. “I will hear you in the hall. Remember, there are people who can sleep, despite of parliamentary committees.”

“This is too insolent,” whispered Batten. “If you arrest him not, Master Thistleton, I will.”

“Leave him to me,” answered the colonel, gravely. “A committee of the house must not be bearded by the best man in the realm. Leave him to me;” and thus saying, he followed the young lord down the stairs.

When they were in the hall, in which were several servants, Lord Walton paused in the midst.

“Now, gentlemen,” he said, “what are your further commands?”

"I have but to ask, my lord," demanded Thistleton, "whether you are disposed to resist the lawful authority of parliament?"

"The unlawful exercise of authority it does not possess, you mean," replied the peer. "But not to cavil at words, sir—if I say I am, what then?"

"Why then I should be obliged to do that which would be most unpleasant to me," replied Colonel Thistleton.

"I rather think, however, that such must be the result, sir," rejoined Charles Walton, with a cold and indifferent air.

"I mean, sir, that I shall be compelled to put you under some restraint," said Thistleton, with an angry brow, "which must certainly be done if——"

"If I permit you," added Lord Walton, seeing that he paused. "Colonel Thistleton, you are mistaken," he continued, advancing towards him. "I arrest you, sir, for high treason, in the king's name! Give up your

sword!" and he laid his hand firmly on his shoulder.

Dr. Bastwick shrunk back, and looked towards the door; and, while the colour died away in Batten's cheek, Thistleton shook off the young lord's grasp, exclaiming—

"Call up the horse from the window, Batten!" and as he spoke, he drew his blade.

"They are not there!" answered Batten, with shaking knees.

"No, sir, they are not there!" rejoined the master of the mansion; "those that are left of them are now galloping hard to escape Major Randal's keen riders. You may have heard of his name, sir; and it would be well to put up your weapon and submit to what cannot be avoided. Call in a party, Langan."

"Well, my lord," cried Thistleton, thrusting back his sword into the scabbard, "this is a most shameless breach of——"

"Of what, sir?" demanded Lord Walton.

“ You came hither upon an unsavoury errand. You have attempted to cozen me from the beginning. Without lawful power or authority you have infringed upon the rights of an Englishman ; and I told you that I would stay here to deal with my unexpected guests as befitted their quality and commission. But mark me, Colonel Thistleton, had you been moderate and wise—had you carried on your search with decency, you should have gone from this house without hindrance or molestation. I would have remembered that I had given the parliament no greater intimation of my intentions than they have given me, and treated you with civility and respect ; but you have exceeded all propriety ; you have pried where no likelihood existed of finding what you sought ; you have even expressed the purpose of intruding on the privacy of my sister’s chamber. The measure is full, gentlemen, and it is now too late. You are all three prisoners under arrest ; and it will be

for his majesty to determine the full extent of your deserts. You see it is in vain to resist," he added, pointing to the door, where stood a party of soldiers fully armed. "Take them back to their chambers, Langan; suffer no communication between them; place a sentry at each door, and then return to me."

The members of the committee looked dolefully in each other's faces, but they well saw that what the young nobleman said was but too true, regarding the uselessness of remonstrance or opposition, and with bent heads and dejected countenances they were led away.

CHAPTER VI.

“Now, Roger Hartup,” said the young lord, as soon as the deputies were gone, “tell me more of this news. You were with the party it seems.”

“Why, yes, my lord,” replied a tall, long-boned Wiltshire man, dressed in the full colours of the house of Walton, with broad sword by his side, and pistols in his belt ; “Langan took me with him without saying a word of where he was going. He told me afterwards that he was obliged to come back for fear your lordship should need him, and that I was to stay with the major and his troop, because I knew all the lanes and by-

ways, and, moreover, loved playing with hand and arm."

"It was well bethought," said his master ;
"they might need a guide."

"I don't know, my lord," replied the servant ; "but the captain of the troop seemed to know all the hedge-rows, as if he had been born among them. But as soon as Major Randal had heard Langan's message, he gave the order to muster, and be ready in an hour. That was about half-past one, my lord, for we had scattered the pebbles about as we went, I warrant, and before half-past two, the troop were in their saddles, and moving down at a brisk trot by Lumley-lane, and then at a canter, over the common. That brought us to Hill-down, where all the folks were asleep, and then we had three miles of high road to Rushford. As we were crossing the brook, or rather letting the horses drink, for the major had a care to the beasts' mouths, it being a hot night, we heard a trumpet sound Bishop's

Merton way; so then he gave the order to trot, and taking the cart road, we came upon the edge of the meadows, where we could see the road up to the house, and yet have shelter of the alders; and there we sat quite still till we saw the Roundhead rascals coming up at a walk, with a sort of animal at their head, more like a chandler than a soldier, and beside him, Dry, of Longsoaken, on his grey mare. When they got out clear upon the meadow, old Dry pointed along towards the bottom, and said something—we could not hear what he said, but it was like as if he told them—if you keep down that way, you'll get up to the house without being seen from the windows. The major spoke never a word. Indeed, he spoke very little all the time, but let them go on till——”

“Was Dry still with them?” asked his master, interrupting his discourse.

“Lord bless your lordship, no,” answered the servant; “he left them as soon as he had

pointed out the way, and trotted back. But when they were half across the meadows, about half a gun-shot from the alders, a trumpeter's horse of ours smelt them out, and, like an undrilled beast, thinking his master was somewhat long in sounding the charge, he began and neighed as loud as he could. Thereupon, they halted, and began to look about, as if a horse neighing was somewhat wonderful ; and then the major gave the word, and we were out from the alders in a minute, and down upon them. Your lordship has seen a plump of teal rise up from a pond, and whirl away all in a sweep. Well, four-fifths of them were round in a minute, and longest legs won the day. About twenty old fellows, with copper noses and steel caps, stood their ground, however, and fired their pistols at us, keeping altogether, and showing broad sword. But we took to steel, too, and they could not bide it, but broke ; and though they fought better than I ever thought to see

such crop-eared hounds fight, they were forced to follow their fellows, though not before some seven had tasted green turf, and had as much of it as will serve them till the world's end. Then we wheeled and followed the rest, cutting them off from the town ; and, though they rode hard, yet more than nine or ten had cause to wish their spurs were better, till at length, after having chased them back to Rushford, the major sent our Captain Barecolt, with thirty men, to keep them going, while he halted, and gave me ten to bring here, saying, your lordship might need them."

"Then did Dry, of Longsoaken, fly with them?" demanded his lord ; "or did he run back to the town?"

"I doubt that he knew of the affair at all, my lord," replied the man ; "he was far down the lane before we charged. No trumpet was blown for fear of bringing the militia men from Bishop's Merton upon us, and the banks would prevent him from seeing or hearing either."

“Then we will strike a blow at him,” said Lord Walton.

The servant rubbed his hands and laughed. —“That will rejoice the cockles of many a poor man’s heart in Bishop’s Merton,” he cried. “The old sanctified sinner is hated as much as he is feared. Why he was the cause of poor old Sergeant Neil being dragged away, and killed with bad usage; and I do believe the boys would stone him on the green, if they knew it, for he—the old man—used to gather the lads about him on the green, and tell them stories of the old wars, when Tyrone was a rebel in Ireland and he fought under Blount, Earl of Devon, till their little eyes almost came out of their heads.”

“Dry was the cause, did you say?” asked the young nobleman. “I thought the only cause was found in the words he spoke—that the king, if he were well counselled, would call William of Orange to his aid, would raise his standard at once, march to London,

proclaim martial law, and hang the two ring-leaders of the parliament before the door of the house."

"Ay, my lord, that was the pretence," replied the servant, "though he never said all that; and they pretended, too, he knew more of what was going on in the north, if he chose to speak. But the real reason was, that the old man, one day last year, when he was stronger than he was afterwards, heard the sneaking villain saying things to poor little Arrah that were not comely, and broke his head with his staff. Dry stomached the affront till the time came for his revenge, and then brought the men over from Devizes to take old Neil away; so I am right glad your lordship is going to punish him on that account."

"'Tis not on that account, Roger Hartup," replied his master, gravely, "for of that I know nothing; but first, the man is a rank traitor, as there is proof enough; and secondly, I am convinced that this fire last night was

not kindled without help. There were men seen about the place just after dark. Dry was up here upon a false pretence in the morning; and no one was near the west tower with a light. Bring me the paper and ink, and call the lance prisade of the troop who came with the men."

He wrote a few hasty lines while the servant was gone; and on his return with a stout, broad-set soldier, the young nobleman said—"Now, sir, do you think that Major Randal will object to your executing a warrant, under my hand, for the arrest of a rank traitor in the neighbourhood?"

"I was ordered to receive your commands, my lord, and obey them," replied the soldier. "But the major told me to beg your lordship to let him know early what you intended to do, for that he did not hold it safe to remain here much after noon, for fear of being cut off."

"I will send to him directly," replied Lord Walton; "but you, in the mean time, take

this warrant, and go round by the back of the town to a place called Longsoaken, where you will apprehend one Ezekiel Dry. Bring him hither without giving him time to speak with any one in private."

"But if he resists?" asked the man.

"Use force," answered Lord Walton, and then added, "but there will be no resistance. Take all your men with you but those who are guarding the committee-men, and five of my people beside. You, Roger, go with him, with Hugh, and three others. Leave Langan, for I shall want him ; and now," he continued, as soon as they had retired, "to examine into the business of this fire."

Thus saying, he rose, took his hat, which lay beside him, and, passing through the neighbouring hall, went out upon the terrace. Then, circling round the ruins of the tower which had fallen, he made his way to the end, where, black and still reeking, stood the part of the building in which the fire had commenced.

No one was near, and Lord Walton stood and gazed at the ruin for several minutes with sad and solemn feelings. It looked to him like the corpse of one untimely slain ; all was grey and desolate, where lately had been life and cheerfulness. The room in which he used to sit was gone, and all that marked the spot where he had passed many an hour of calm and pleasant contemplation, were the charred ends of the rafters, and one stout beam, which, not quite destroyed, hung black and crumbling from side to side, bending down half broken in the midst. Part of the wall had fallen in, and part still stood, rugged and ruined ; while in the chamber below some tattered fragments of rich damask furniture and old tapestry hung fluttering in the wind. The smoke still rose up from the pile of rubbish beneath ; but on one of the chimneys a bird had already ventured to perch, as if claiming it thenceforth for the inheritance of the wild things of the earth.

After a few minutes' sad contemplation, the young lord turned and looked around over the fair scene he was about to leave, perhaps for ever, as it lay, calm and smiling, in the sunshine of the early morning, notwithstanding all the destruction of the preceding night, and the gloomy prospects of the future, with the same peaceful indifference wherewith some have supposed the disembodied spirit to look upon the wild passions and contentions of the world.

As he gazed, however, he saw the figure of a girl seated upon the trunk of a felled beech-tree, which lay close beneath the terrace, and instantly perceiving that it was that of Arrah Neil, he beckoned to her to come up to him. The girl did so without hesitation; and, as she climbed the stone steps which led from the park, he watched her countenance, to see if the moody and abstracted fit, to which she was frequently subject, was still upon her or had passed away. There was no trace of it left. Her beautiful eyes were clear and bright,

and full of intelligence, though her brow was grave and even sad; and her look was raised towards him with a gentle, imploring, deprecating expression, as if she had in some way offended and sought forgiveness.

“Well, my poor Arrah,” said the young nobleman, in a kind tone, “I fear you were much frightened last night.”

“I was frightened, my lord,” she answered, bending down her eyes; “but not much; I knew it was for the best, and hoped that it would soon be extinguished.”

“All things are for the best,” replied Lord Walton. “God forbid that I should doubt it, Arrah. Yet this has been a severe loss and a great grief to me; for I cannot see the house of my fathers so injured without regret. It is not that many invaluable and rare things have been destroyed, but that mementos of the past are gone with them—things the sight of which recalled the days of boyhood—places stored with a thousand memories, ay, and a thousand

associations with times before my own. I can no longer sit in that room, Arrah, and think of those who tenanted it in former years, or of all the many scenes that have there taken place."

"I am very sorry for it indeed," replied Arrah Neil; "but yet ——" and she paused, leaving her sentence unconcluded.

"Tell me, Arrah," continued Lord Walton, not heeding her broken reply, "when you had retired to rest last night, which they tell me was about nine, did you hear any noise in the tower, or any one going up the stairs which pass close behind the room where you slept?"

She gazed at him for a moment in silence, with her large bright eyes fixed, somewhat sadly, upon his countenance; then shook her head, and answered, "No one."

The young lord remarked the peculiarity of her look, and added—"I am sure you would answer truly, Arrah, for your poor grandfather, who gave you an education so much above that which persons far higher in rank

bestow upon their children, taught you, I know, always to adhere to truth. Yet hear me, Arrah; I have always tried to be kind to you and yours: I have been fond of you from your childhood. Now, I suspect that this fire was not the work of accident. I cannot find that the door at the foot of the tower was closed last night. That enemies were abroad I have too good reason to know; and you, too, warned me yourself that danger was at hand——”

“Oh, but it was not that!—it was not that!” cried Arrah Neil; “the danger I feared for you was not of fire, Charles Walton. Ask me not to tell you, for they made me swear I would not, before they would let me go.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the young nobleman, gazing at her thoughtfully. “Well, I will not ask you then.”

“Do not! do not!” she cried, “for I could not refuse you anything; and that would be wrong after I have sworn—I would lay down

my life for you, indeed I would; but you would not wish me to break my word."

"No—no!" replied Lord Walton; "but to return. I suspect, as I have said, that this destruction has not been committed by accident."

"Not entirely," said Arrah Neil, looking down.

"Not entirely!" exclaimed the peer. "Then you know how it happened—you know who did it—Arrah, speak, who was it? That, at least, I may ask."

The poor girl trembled terribly, but then, in a low sad voice, she answered, "It was I."

"You?—you?" cried Lord Walton, gazing at her sternly, while his lip quivered in the attempt to suppress the emotions within him. The girl answered nothing, and after a struggle with himself, he waived his hand, saying—"I forgive you, my poor girl—you did it when you were not yourself. Tell no one else, Arrah—the secret is safe with me;" and

he turned away, lest one harsh word should mingle with the kinder ones he had spoken.

When he had gone some ten or twelve paces, however, Arrah Neil darted after him, caught his hand, and pressed her beautiful lips upon it.

“Do not abandon me, Charles Walton,” she said. “Do not cast me off and hate me. Tell me, would you rather see all those ruins, and lose all you have lost, or be to-morrow a prisoner in the dark Tower of London, perhaps never to ride the green fields again while you live?”

Lord Walton paused with a look of bewildered inquiry; but then suddenly a light rose up in his eyes, and laying his hand upon Arrah Neil’s shoulder, he said—“Thank you, Arrah! thank you. ’Tis a wild way of deliverance.—Yet thank you, dear child. You meant it well—and it has succeeded——But here are people coming. Go back to Annie; we must not leave you behind us.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE seasons of the year seemed to take their tone from the spirit of the times, and the discord that was raging throughout the land. The summer was gloomy and full of storms. Instead of bright sunshine and smiling skies, heavy clouds had been gathering over the heavens from the beginning of the year, and although every now and then a warm and splendid day, such as that which we have described in the beginning of this tale, broke in upon the heavy aspect of the summer, as if to remind man of fairer and happier times, yet week after week passed in tempests, rain, and gloom; and signs and portents, such as might have alarmed nations in more supersti-

tious days, were seen in the sky, and filled the hearts of the more timid with apprehension.

It was upon the morning of one of these sad and frowning days, that a troop of horse, consisting of about a hundred and fifty men, well armed and mounted, took its way across a wide and somewhat barren plain about forty miles to the north-east of Bishop's Merton, encumbered with a good deal of baggage, and escorting two or three of the heavy carriages of the times, in which were some six or seven women. The prospect was wide and dreary, extending in a number of grey lines which afforded the eye no pleasing object to rest upon, except here and there a little mound or tumulus bearing on its top a clump of black looking trees. In the distance was a range of low wood, apparently stunted and withered by the chilling blasts which swept over the plain; and a piece of water of some extent was seen glistening on the right, with the sandy road, along which the cavalcade took its way, wind-

ing between the mere and the wood. No hedge-rows broke the wide extent, and the ground appeared to be somewhat marshy, for numerous ditches intersected it in every direction, and a large trench ran along on either side of the path, with here and there a small wooden bridge to cross from the sandy highway to the green turf of the plain.

The progress of the party was not very quick, for, as we have said, the carriages were heavy, and their wheels, as well as those of the two or three carts and waggons, sunk deep and loose in the shifting soil of the road. By the side of the foremost of the carriages generally rode a cavalier, with whom the reader is already acquainted under the name of Lord Walton, and ever and anon he laid his hand upon the heavy door, and spoke in at the window to his sister or to Arrah Neil, the latter seldom replying except by a monosyllable or a look. Annie Walton, however, conversed with him gaily and lightly ; not that her heart was by any means at ease, or her

bosom without its apprehensions, but she was well aware that her brother was grieved for all the inconvenience that she suffered, and for the danger to which she was exposed; and, with kindly and generous feeling towards him, she made as little as possible of every annoyance on the march—concealed all the fears that she might experience, and seemed unconscious of the perils of the way. She might not, it is true, deceive her brother as to her own sensations; for he knew her well, and understood her kindness and devotion; but still it made the burden lighter to him to hear no murmur, and to witness no terror.

From time to time, during the march of the two preceding days, some of the rumours which, true and false alike, always run through a country in a state of agitation, had reached Lord Walton's party, speaking of troops marching hither and thither in the neighbourhood. Now it was a detachment from Lord Essex's army; now it was a body of men crossing the country to reinforce Waller; now

it was a body of militia called out by parliamentary commissioners from the district or the county through which they were passing. But Lord Walton paid but little attention to these reports, having taken every necessary precaution by throwing out several small parties in front, at the distance of about two or three miles, to guard against surprise, and secure his onward course towards Coventry.

When any rumour reached him, indeed, which bore more strongly the semblance of truth than the rest, and was corroborated by his own knowledge of the position and designs of the various persons to whom it referred, he would ride forward to the head of the line, and converse for a few minutes with a thin, bony, grave-looking personage in black, who bore few signs of being a military man, except his large boots of untanned leather, his heavy steel-mounted sword, and the pistols at his saddlebow. Thus, when they had got about half way across the plain, and a horseman galloped up from the right, leaping one or

two narrow ditches by which it was intersected, and then, not able to cross the wider trench which separated the road from the turf, riding along by the side of the troop, and making signs to Charles Walton that he had something to communicate, the young nobleman accordingly reined in his horse, and suffering his party to pass on, lingered behind till they were out of ear-shot.

“Well, Master Hurst,” he then asked, “what is your news? I was sorry you would not join us; but I am glad to see you here.”

“I told Langan I would follow you, my lord,” replied the new-comer; “but I had to put my house in order, and sell some hay, for it does not do to go soldiering in these times without money in one’s pocket, and I had but short notice. However, my lord, you had better be on your guard, for as I came over the moor, I found a boy keeping sheep out there between the wood and the water, and wishing to know whereabouts you were, for I could not see you at that time——”

"You did not mention my name, I hope," said Lord Walton.

"Oh no, my lord," answered the horseman ; "I took care not to do that ; I only asked if he had seen a body of soldiers, without saying horse or foot. So the boy said, 'Oh, yes ! that there were five hundred and fifty lying behind the wood—for he had counted them, seemingly—like a flock of sheep.' Then I asked him how many horse there were ; to which he replied by saying, 'Two, and that all the rest had guns and bandoliers and steel caps, except a few, who had long pikes in their hands.'"

"This seems serious," replied Lord Walton ; "we must look to this intelligence."

"There is more serious work behind, my lord," replied Hurst ; "for this news gave me the key of what I saw myself in the morning. These musketeers are not alone. They have got cavalry for their support, my lord, or I am much mistaken : not two hours ago I saw the tail of a troop going into the little village, the spire of which you can just see rising up

there. I should have taken them for your men, but that they were coming the contrary road; so I avoided the village for fear of worse."

"Well, Hurst, ride on to the next bridge," said Lord Walton, "and then join me on the road with Major Randal, whom I must consult on our proceedings."

Thus saying, he spurred on his horse, and galloped forward to the head of the line, where, pulling up by the side of our spare friend in black, he communicated to him all that he had just heard.

"Ah!" said Randal, in his usual dry and deliberate tone—"Ah! Five hundred and fifty musketeers, rather better than three to one. That would not matter if the ground were fair; but these ditches, these ditches, they are awkward things in the way of cavalry; if our horses could leap them as easily as their shot, the matter would soon be settled. Does any one know what like the ground is there? They will gall us sadly if we have to expose our flank to the wood."

"I fear so indeed," replied Lord Walton; "but perhaps if I were to pass the next bridge, take a circuit round and dislodge them, while you pursue your way along the road, we might contrive to get into better fighting ground."

"Let us see what it is like first," said Randal; "here comes your newsmonger, my lord, we shall learn more from him. Now, master yeoman, how does the land lie about the wood; is there good room for a charge, or is it cut up like this?"

"Between the wood and the road," answered Hurst, "it is just like a gridiron, with ditches enough to drain the sea!"

"And behind the wood—do you know any thing of that?" continued Randal.

"It is good enough there," said the horseman, divining the object of his question, "but you cannot get at it for the river."

"They have some good soldiers amongst them," said Randal. "Such ground was not chosen by one of the old bottle-nosed serving men of London."

“They must have good intelligence, too,” said Lord Walton, “to fix so exactly on a point where they can best attack us. If it were not for my sister and the women, we might take their fire in passing, and get into the good ground beyond. But the carriages and baggage would prove a sad encumbrance.”

“Ah, women, women!” cried Randal, “they are the causes of all the mischief in the world. However, we must dispose of them, and must take our resolution quickly; there is no going back now, my lord, and we must make our way forward at whatever risk—luckily you have brought all the spare horses and the women’s saddles; they must quit the carriages and mount. As for the baggage, it must take its chance and belong to the winners.”

“But I cannot expose my sister,” exclaimed Lord Walton, “to such an affair as this—she can go back to the village.”

“No, no,” said Randal, quickly; “there is no need of that; this good yeoman can guide her round with the rest of the women, while

we make our way forward, and do the best that we can with these gentry in front. They will not chase her if we keep on our way ; but if we quit the road, they will of course draw to their left and cut us off between the causeway and the water. Now, my lord, be quick ; get them out and away, I will send a dozen of my men to escort them, with Barecolt at their head. 'Tis the best task for him ; for though he does not want courage, with women he will have room to talk, and that is his chief occupation. He may lie, too, there as much as he likes, and nobody will find him out. Now, master yeoman, you be guide — lead these ladies over the moor, round by the back of that great pond, and into the open ground above it. When you get to that mound with the trees on it, you may halt a bit, and watch what we are about on the road. If you see that we get the worst, put to the spur, and gallop on till you rejoin the Coventry-road, then on as fast as may be to the king, who will be in Coventry by noon to-morrow. If

you see we make good our ground, come back and join us."

"But there are horse in that village, sir," answered Hurst.

"That can't be helped," replied Randal; "we have no other chance. Besides, they may be our people as well as the enemy's—Stay, it may be as well to see: I will send on Barccolt, while you halt on the hill. He can play either part—swear and swagger like the most licentious cavalier, or cant and pule like the most starched puritan."

While this conversation had been taking place, the party had not ceased to advance slowly along the road; but the order to halt was now given, and preparations were made for carrying into execution the plan decided upon. The carriages were stopped, Miss Walton and her attendants placed hastily upon the spare horses which had been brought from Bishop's Merton, and the small body under Captain Barccolt were drawn out, and commanded to fall into the rear. Annie

Walton did all that she was told to do without a word ; but she looked in her brother's face, as he placed her on horseback, and, bending down her beautiful head, kissed his cheek, while a silent, irrepressible tear rose in her eyes.

“Do not fear, Annie,—do not fear,” said Charles Walton ; “we will soon put these fellows to the rout.”

But it is in vain, in moments of danger and difficulty, to commend courage to those who, by fate or situation, are doomed to inactivity ; for they must still feel for those that they love, if not for themselves ; and though Miss Walton considered not for one moment the personal peril which she encountered, her heart beat with apprehensions for her brother, which no words could quiet or remove. Lord Walton then turned to Arrah Neil, who was already mounted, and leaning his hand on the horse's neck, he asked — “Can you manage the horse, my poor Arrah ? had you not better ride behind a trooper ?”

“ Oh, no,” she said ; “ no, I can ride quite well — I remember now ;” and, indeed, the manner in which she held her rein, the ease and grace with which she sat the horse, and the command which she had over it, though a powerful and spirited animal, clearly showed that at some time she must have been well accustomed to such exercise.

Lord Walton looked down with a thoughtful expression of countenance, as if there were something that puzzled him. But just at that moment Major Randal rode up, exclaiming—
“ We must lose no more time, my lord ; if we halt any longer here, they may see what we are about, and act accordingly. I shall order the troop to advance, for women are always slow, and they must come after us as they can, till they reach the little bridge up yonder. Let the carts and carriages come first, and the women can bring up the rear. Now, mark ye, Barecolt, follow this good yeoman, with the ladies under your charge, till you reach that little mound with the trees on the right. You

can deliver your stomach by the way of any of the wild imaginations that may fret you; but when you get to the mound you must give up talking, and, riding on to the village alone, make use of your wits, if you have any left, to ascertain whether there be a troop of horse in it, and of what side."

"Alone!" said Barecolt.

"To be sure," answered Randal, with a laugh; "the man who preached in the morning at Rochelle, and defeated the papists in the evening, who defended the pass in the Cevennes single-handed against a whole army, may well go on alone to reconnoitre a handful of cavalry. Besides, it will make you careful, Master Barecolt, when you know that your own life depends on your own tongue."

"It has often done that," answered Barecolt. "I remember, when I was in Spain, being attacked by some twenty banditti, and putting my back against a rock——"

"March!" cried Randal, interrupting him; "tell that to the girls. It will do to pass the

time as well as any other lie;" and riding on, he led the way, while Lord Walton continued by his sister's side, till, reaching the little bridge, the good farmer, Hurst, turned off from the road into the meadows, followed by the young lady, her servants, and the escort.

With anxious eyes Annie Walton and Arrah Neil watched the advance of the larger party of horse towards the wood before them, although neither of them had heard the exact cause of alarm, or were aware of where the danger was to be apprehended, or what was its nature. All they knew was, that peril lay upon the onward road; and, notwithstanding all the assiduities of Captain Barecolt—who, riding by their side wherever the space admitted it, endeavoured to entertain them with some of the monstrous fictions in which his imagination was accustomed to indulge—they listened not to his tales, they scarcely even heard his words, but, with their eyes turned constantly to the road they had just

quitted, pursued a path, forming with it an acute angle, which led round the back of a large piece of water that lay gleaming before them.

Once or twice they had to dismount, and lead their horses over the little wooden bridges which crossed the ditches intersecting the plain; and more than once, where these were so insecure as to give way under the horses' feet, they were forced to quit their direct line, and take a circuit round. Nevertheless, as they cantered quickly over the turf between, they had reached the little tree-covered knoll which had been pointed out as their halting-place, before the troop which was pursuing the high road had arrived at the spot where the low wood we have mentioned skirted the way.

That wood did not indeed approach close to the road, but lay at the distance of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards on the left, extending parallel with it for nearly a quarter of a mile, and having a green meadow,

and the continuation of the broad trench we have mentioned, between. A river of some width, flowing from the right, crossed the highway under a bridge of two arches, at a short distance from the wood; and at the moment that Miss Walton and her companions reached the mound, the head of her brother's troop was about three hundred yards from this bridge.

Knowing well that Major Randal was not a man to be trifled with, Capt. Barecolt, as soon as they had arrived at the appointed place, took a flowery and ceremonious leave of Miss Walton, and rode on towards the village of which they had now a better view than before. The young lady's eyes, however, were still fixed upon her brother's troop, as she remained half way up the little mound, with her horse turned towards the road, and her maids behind, with Arrah Neil upon her left hand, and the small party of troopers a little in advance.

They had continued thus for some four or five minutes in breathless expectation of what

was to come next, when they perceived the troop brought to a sudden halt, and an apparent consultation take place at the head of the little column. At that moment Annie Walton heard one of the troopers just before her say aloud — “They have barricaded the bridge, that’s clear enough.”

“Good God!” she exclaimed; “what will they do?”

But the man, although he heard her words, only turned his head over his shoulder to give her a look, without making any reply.

“There is a little path, lady,” said one of the maids, who, placed higher up the hill, saw more distinctly the ground beneath—“there is a little path down from the side of the bridge into the meadows below, if they were to take that they could get out of the way of the wood, and I should think could cross the river, for it spreads out there so wide, it must be shallow.”

“They do not see it,” said Annie Walton; “they do not see it for the bank.”

Almost as she spoke, a considerable body of foot drew out from the wood ; and a party of about a hundred men running forward, drew up in line close to the bridge, and opened a fire of musketry upon the small troop of cavalry which occupied the road. Several horses at the head of the line were seen to plunge violently, and one fell with its rider. The next instant the whole were in motion, a charge was made upon the bridge ; and for a few moments all was confusion and disarray, in which they could only see that the cavaliers had recourse to their pistols, and were endeavouring apparently to force the barricade.

“ Oh ! the path, the path ! ” cried Annie Walton. “ If any man will ride and tell them of the path, and that they can ford the river below, I will give him a hundred crowns.”

One of the troopers was instantly dashing forward, but the man who had been left in command called him back, saying that they had been ordered to remain there, and must

obey. By this time the charge had been repulsed, and the cavaliers were retreating under a heavy fire in some disarray. They formed again with great rapidity, however, behind the waggons and carriages.

Miss Walton remonstrated against the recall of her messenger ; but without waiting to hear the reply, Arrah Neil exclaimed—"I will go, dear lady, I will go ;" and shaking her rein, she put the horse to its speed, and darted forward before any one could stop her.

"I will go, too," cried Annie Walton. "Why should she risk her life, and a sister fear." And thus saying, she struck her horse with the whip, and followed. In a moment, without uttering a word, the stout yeoman, Hurst, was by the lady's side ; but Arrah Neil outsped them both, and rode direct for the path she had observed. Without fear, without pause, the devoted girl rode on, although, as soon as ever she was perceived from the bridge, the shots began to drop around her, for her object was instantly divined, and no

consideration for her sex restrained the soldiery.

“This way, lady, this way,” cried Hurst, turning to the left; “we can speak to them over the dyke, and we shall be further from the fire.”

They were now within a few hundred yards of Lord Walton’s party, [and he was seen at the head of the troop gesticulating vehemently to his sister to keep back.

“Ride away, my dear, ride away,” cried Hurst, “I will go on;” but at that moment a shot struck his charger, and horse and rider went down together. Miss Walton, however, rode forward, seeing the good yeoman struggling up; and Arrah Neil, too, pursued her way, reached the bridge, dashed up the path, entered the road, and, in the midst of all the fire, galloped on till, when within ten yards of the carriages, a ball struck the animal in the haunches, and he reared violently with the pain. She still kept her seat, however, till Lord Walton, spurring forward, seized the

bridal and caught her in his arms, just as the horse fell, and, struggling in the agonies of death, rolled over into the dyke.

“Good God! what is it?” exclaimed Charles Walton, bearing her back behind the waggon. “Annie, Annie, ride away,” he shouted to his sister; “if you love me, ride away.”

“There is a path down by the bridge—the river is fordable below,” exclaimed Arrah Neil; “there are no dykes beyond the stream. All is clear on that side.”

“Look, look! Charles,” cried Miss Walton, pointing with her hand, “there is a body of cavalry drawing out from the village, and some one riding at full speed towards our people on the hill.”

“Friends, on my life!” cried Major Randal. “Now, fair aid-de-camp, gallop round there to the right, and keep out of fire. Tell your people to charge the Roundheads in the front, while those from the village take them on the flank, and we do the best we can on the right. What was that you said, pretty maid?” he

continued, addressing Arrah Neil—"a path down by the bridge—the stream fordable?"

"Ride away, Annie, ride away," cried Lord Walton—"more to the right, more to the right."

"We must push forward the carriages and carts," said Major Randal; "they will give us some shelter. Where this girl came up, there can we go down."

"I saw the path quite clear," said one of the men.

But without more words the new plan proposed was immediately followed; the carts, drawn up two abreast, were pushed forward towards the bridge by the main strength of the dismounted troopers, for the horses had become unmanageable, and the traces had been cut; and under shelter of these and of the carriages, which formed a line on the left, the troop advanced in good order to the bridge, notwithstanding all the efforts of the musketeers.

In the mean while, Annie Walton took her

way back towards the hill, beckoning to the yeoman, Hurst, who had by this time freed himself from his horse ; but he, with that sort of passive bravery which is so characteristic of the English peasant, continued deliberately to unbuckle the girths of his saddle (about which, it appeared afterwards, all his stock was stowed away in various bags and contrivances), and made not the slightest effort to get out of musket shot till he had got the whole upon his back, after which he trudged away towards the hill, only injured by one ball which grazed his arm.

Losing no time by the way, Miss Walton soon rejoined the party of troopers at the knoll, and was giving them the order of Major Randal, when Barecolt himself came up at full speed, exclaiming—

“Great news, great news ! There is the Earl of Beverley with two hundred horse, ready to charge the Roundheads in the flank.”

“We have Major Randal’s orders to charge them in front,” said the sergeant.

“Stay, stay!” cried Barecolt; “wait a minute, wait a minute, and then the man who does not kill his five of the enemy, should never sit down with a gentleman to dinner again. Steady, my men, steady; look to your pistols, have ready your spurs. As soon as the earl has crossed the road, I give the word.”

“See, see,” cried Annie Walton, “they have got down into the meadow—they are fording the stream—see what a fire the enemy are keeping up upon them. Oh, charge, charge, for God’s sake, and help them!”

“Madam, I always obey a lady,” said Barecolt, with a low bow, at the same time raising the blade of his sword to his lips and kissing it. “She is the best commanding officer in the world. Now! Upon them—charge and at them!” and with these words he led his little troop forward with an air of gallantry and determination which went far to justify the gasconades in which he indulged.

The ford, though somewhat deep, was smooth

and easy, but still it exposed the troop of cavaliers to a terrible fire of musketry from the bridge; and Annie Walton, left alone with her women on the hill, saw with a sinking heart flash after flash run along the road, whilst the thick white smoke was wafted by the wind over her brother's party, rendering the figures indistinct, and concealing their movements in some degree from her eyes. A moment after, however, she saw two or three horsemen break out of the clouds and gallop on for several hundred yards into the meadows; then followed a greater number, and she could hear shouts and calls, in the midst of which she thought she distinguished her brother's voice: and then she saw the troopers halt, and form again in line, while Barecolt with his little party bore steadily on at a quick pace somewhat to the right; and a much larger body of cavalry, which seemed to have taken a circuit from the village behind some hedgerows that skirted the edge of the plain, appeared advancing rapidly on the left of the musketeers,

and occupying the whole space between the wood and the high road.

There was now a momentary pause, the firing ceased, the troop of Lord Walton and Major Randal remained still, the smoke cleared in some degree away, and Annie asked herself, "What next?"

The moment, however, that Barecolt came on a line with the rest, the shrill blast of a trumpet was heard from the two larger bodies of horse; all were again in movement; and, galloping forward towards the point occupied by the musketeers, the three parties of royalists charged headlong down upon them, while once more the bright flash of the fire-arms ran along the line of the road, and the cloud of smoke again rolled over the combatants.

It was no longer to be repulsed that the cavaliers now charged. For full ten minutes, the eyes of the watchers on the hill could perceive nothing but one struggling and confused mass in the midst of the dim white cloud, with the frequent flashes of the guns, and every

now and then a party of two or three becoming more apparent, and then plunging again into the midst of the *mêlée*. At the same time the frequent reports of the musketry and the long-continued blasts of the trumpet, mingled with shouts and cries, were borne by the wind to the ear, showing that the fight was continued with desperate determination on each side ; and Annie Walton could restrain her anxiety no longer, but moved slowly forward towards the scene of combat.

Before she had advanced many yards a horse without a rider rushed across the road, and galloped over the meadows towards her—paused, turned round, and, with elevated head and expanded nostrils, gazed towards the place from which he came—then with a wild neigh broke away again, and rushed across the plain. In another instant three or four men on foot, with muskets in their hands, were seen running at full speed, and Miss Walton checked her horse, fearing that they might come near her ; but they made direct

for one of the ditches we have mentioned, and jumping in, seemed to crouch down for concealment.

“They have won the day,” cried Annie Walton, and turning to her women, who had followed somewhat slowly, she repeated—“The cavaliers have won the day—God grant it may be without great loss;” and at the thought of what might be her brother’s fate in that fierce fight, her heart sunk with that dread which we all feel when the veil, which always hangs more or less over the future, is brought nearer to our eyes, so as to render our contemplation even of the present dim and indistinct.

A larger party of foot, consisting of perhaps twenty or thirty men, was then seen hurrying along the road; but close upon them came a body of cavalry, and in a moment they were dispersed and flying over the plain. Almost at the same time, the heavy mass of horse and infantry which had so long remained mingled together near the bridge,

seemed to explode like a shell, parties of foot and horsemen scattering here and there in every direction ; and the terrible scene of a rout and pursuit now took place—the musketeers in general casting down their arms and flying, while the cavaliers followed them here and there over the plain, and put them to the sword on the least show of resistance.

In the midst of all this disarray and confusion, a group of some twenty or thirty horsemen were seen gathered round a small flag upon the highest part of the road near the bridge ; and after a brief pause, during which they remained perfectly still and motionless, the loud and peculiar trumpet call—known in those days as the recall to the standard—came shrill but musical upon the air ; and the next instant four or five horsemen separated themselves from the party, and rode up at an easy canter towards the wooded knoll.

Annie Walton gazed eagerly, and, recognising her brother's form, after one moment of brief anxiety, rode on to meet him with her

heart at ease. Lord Walton pushed forward his horse before the rest, and wheeling it by her side, pressed her hand in his, murmuring, "My dearest Annie, my sweet sister, you have been sadly terrified, I fear, but yet you have shown yourself a soldier's child."

"Oh, Charles, Charles, you are wounded," cried Annie, looking in his face, which was bleeding, and at a gory scarf which was round his left arm.

"Nothing, nothing," replied her brother. "Men will have scratches when they fight with wild beasts, Annie; and these Round-heads have shown themselves as fierce and intractable as wolves or lions. They fought gallantly, however, it must be owned, and have made us pay dearly for our success."

"I fear so, indeed, Charles," cried Miss Walton. "I am sure it must be so. But poor Arrah Neil — is she safe?"

"Oh yes, thank God!" replied Lord Walton. "I sent just now to the coach in which I had placed her, to make sure she was uninjured."

I must not blame her rashness, my Annie, nor yours either, for it has been the means of saving us ; but it was a terrible risk, my dear girl, and your escape is a miracle.”

“ And good Major Randal ?” asked Annie, willing to change the subject.

“ He is safe too,” replied Lord Walton, “ and without a scratch, though never man exposed himself more. But here comes another friend whom you will be glad to see, and to whom we owe all our success.”

“ Oh, Sir Francis Clare !” exclaimed Miss Walton, with a glow of pleasure rising in her cheek ; “ I am most happy to see you.”

“ Nay, not Sir Francis Clare either,” cried her brother, “ but my oldest and truest friend, the Earl of Beverley.”

“ Nay,” said Annie, with a smile, “ it was not fair of you, my lord, to give me a false name the other day. I half intend to punish you by treating you as a stranger still. Had you told me it was Lord Beverley, I should not have said that I never heard my brother men-

tion you, for I can assure you, in former days, his letters were full of no one else. However, there is my hand—I forgive you, trusting with all a woman’s foolish confidence that you had some good reason for cheating me.”

“I will never cheat you more, dear lady,” replied Lord Beverley, taking her hand and raising it to his lips; “but in such times as these it is sometimes needful to seem not what we are, and these *noms de guerre* when once assumed should be kept up to every one. I had to ride near two hundred miles across a disturbed country where the name of Francis Clare might pass unquestioned, when that of Beverley might have soon found me a lodging in the tower. Walton said it was a rash act of mine to risk such an expedition at all; but I have just heard from him that I am not the only rash person where there is a good cause and a great object to be gained.”

“Nay, will you scold me too?” rejoined Miss Walton, laughing; “if so I will hold no further conversation with you. Yet, my good

lord, to say truth, I take less blame to myself for what I did, than for not doing it at once. To see the poor girl, Arrah Neil, willing to risk her life to serve my brother, shamed me, to think that she should encounter danger alone."

"But you might have sent one of the men, dear Annie," said Lord Walton: "it was a soldier's, not a lady's task to carry such intelligence."

"But they would not go," replied Annie Walton; and as they rode back towards the high road, she explained to her brother and his friend the circumstances under which she had acted.

For a minute or two the conversation was as gay and cheerful as a great success just obtained, a great deliverance just achieved, could render it. Lord Beverley explained to his fair companion, that having learned that morning on entering the neighbouring village with a body of two hundred horse, which he had raised for the service of the king, that a

regiment of parliamentary musketeers were lying concealed at the back of the wood, and supposing that their ambush was directed against himself, he had determined to remain in the place, and defend it, should need be, against them ; but that when he found the passage of Lord Walton's troop was opposed, and his friend in danger, he had instantly called his men to the saddle, and advanced to support him. Lord Walton, too, related many of those actions which in such scenes of strife are always crowded into the space of a few minutes ; and much praise did he bestow upon the gallant determination of Major Randal and his troop, and also upon the steadiness and courage displayed by his own tenantry and adherents. Captain Barecolt himself had his full share of commendation.

“ I had thought,” said Charles Walton, “ from his ridiculous bravadoes during the last two days, that the man must be at least a coward, although Randal is not one to suffer such an animal near him : but it proved quite

the contrary; and I saw his long body constantly in the thick of the *mêlée*, and his heavy sword cutting right and left at the steel caps of the musketeers, over the very muzzles of their guns."

As they approached nearer to the scene of conflict, however, the sights which Miss Walton witnessed—the dead, the dying, the wounded, the road stained with deep pools of blood, and the sounds that met her ear—the groan of anguish, the sad complaint, the cry for water and for help—blotted out all memory of their success; and with a shuddering frame and a sad heart she followed her brother to the spot where Major Randal was sitting by his cornet, on the parapet of the bridge, receiving accounts from the different troopers as they came in, of the prisoners taken from the enemy, and the killed and wounded on their own part, while ever and anon a mounted trumpeter by his side blew a loud, long blast, to call the parties from the pursuit.

"Ah, Miss Walton!" cried the old officer,

starting up and addressing her in his usual bluff tone; "I am glad to see you safe and well. I will never say that women are of no use any more; for by my faith, you and that other girl got us out of a pretty predicament. I was blind enough or stupid enough, and so were all the rest, not to mark the little path, for we passed it in charging up to the bridge, but even if we had seen it, we should not have known that the stream was fordable below. However, get you into the carriage again, and shut your eyes or draw the curtains, for I see you look white and sickish, and these sights are not fit for women. The men will have soon pulled down that barricade, and then you can go on, while we get up the wounded, and follow. We must do ten miles more to-night."

"I should prefer to ride," replied Miss Walton; "you had better put the wounded people in the carriages."

"True, true—well bethought," answered the old soldier. "You are a good girl after all."

Lord Walton smiled at this somewhat ambiguous compliment to his sister; but as no time was to be lost, he left her under the care of Lord Beverley, and proceeded to give orders, and make those arrangements which the circumstances required. The barricade, which had been constructed hastily of felled trees, stone, and turf, was speedily removed, and the foremost of the carriages was being brought forward to receive some of the men severely wounded, who were lying about within the very narrow circle to which the strife had been confined, when Lord Walton's servant, Langan, rode up, exclaiming—"My lord, my lord! the prisoners have made their escape."

"What prisoners?" demanded Lord Walton, forgetting those he had brought from Bishop's Merton.

"Why that Roundhead rascal and canting hypocrite, Dry, of Longsoaken, with Thistle-ton, and the rest."

"No," rejoined Roger Hartup, who was

standing near, with a severe wound in his shoulder; "I shot Thistleton through the head after the first charge. He had picked up a sword, I don't know how, and got out of the carriage, and was just making a plunge at Jackson, the forester, when I blew his brains out with my pistol; you will find him lying behind the waggons. Of the rest I know nothing."

"They are all gone," answered Langan.

"And Arrah Neil?" exclaimed Lord Walton advancing towards the carriages.—But Arrah Neil was not there.

CHAPTER VIII.

INQUIRIES were made on every side, but in vain. No one had seen poor Arrah Neil since she had been placed in the coach by Lord Walton; and indeed, in the haste and confusion of the strife which had ensued after the troop had forded the river and attacked the enemy in front, no one had had an opportunity of witnessing what had taken place amongst the carriages, except two wounded men who had been left behind upon the road, one of whom had died before the struggle was over, while the other had crept for security under one of the waggons, which hid everything that was passing from his sight.

The agitation and alarm of Miss Walton

and her brother, seemed somewhat beyond measure in the eyes of good Major Randal, who was anxious to hasten forward with all speed. He waited somewhat impatiently while parties were sent here and there over the plain, to seek for the poor girl who had disappeared; but at length he broke forth in a sharp tone, exclaiming, "We cannot remain here till night, my lord, waiting for this lost sheep; we have got all the wounded men into the coaches and on the waggons, and on my life we must be marching: we have prisoners enough to embarrass us sadly if we were attacked, and who can tell that we may not meet with another party of these worthies?"

"I think not," said the Earl of Beverley, who had shown a good deal of interest in the event which seemed to move his friend so much. "I have heard of no other Round-heads than these in this neighbourhood; but if you will march on, Walton, and take one half of my troop with you, I will remain behind with the rest, for they are fresher than

your men, and we can overtake you after we have done all that is possible to discover this poor girl."

"No," answered Lord Walton, "I will not leave her behind, Francis, as long as there is a chance. You had better march on, major; I will stay with my own people, and follow you to Henley. Annie, you had better go on: your staying, my dear sister, would but embarrass me. Lord Beverley will give you the advantage of his escort, and I will overtake you before night."

It was accordingly arranged as he proposed; and to say the truth, Lord Beverley was by no means displeased with the task of protecting his friend's sister on the way. In the course of a quarter of an hour the whole troop was put in motion; and Annie Walton, though somewhat unwilling to leave her brother behind, followed on horseback, with the earl by her side, and some fourteen or fifteen horse bringing up the rear, at a short distance behind. She had been rendered sad and de-

sponding by all the events which had taken place ; for the first joy of success and deliverance had by this time passed away, and the impression that remained was of that dark and gloomy character which her first entrance upon scenes of strife, bloodshed, and danger, might naturally produce upon a gentle and kindly heart, however firm might be the mind, however strong the resolution.

Her companion well understood the feelings of a girl nurtured with tenderness and luxury, accustomed alone to deal with the peaceful and the graceful things of life, when suddenly forced to witness and take part in the fierce and turbulent acts of civil war, to follow marching men, and be a spectator of battle and slaughter. He knew right well that no gay and lively subject would be pleasant to her ear at such a moment, though the soldier himself might habitually cast off all memory of the strife the instant it was over, and give way to joy and triumph in the hour of success. The cavalier shaped his conversation accord-

ingly, and in a grave though not sad tone, spoke of deeper and more solemn things than had formed the matter of their discourse when last they met. Nevertheless, seeking to win her from her gloom, there came from time to time, across the course of all he said, flashes of bright and brilliant eloquence, rich and imaginative illustrations, sparkling and almost gay allusions to other things and times and scenes, which, without producing the discord that anything like merriment would have occasioned to her ear, stole her thoughts away from gloomier subjects of contemplation, and calling the blessed power of fancy to her aid, enabled her to bear up against the first weight of the dark present.

To Annie Walton there was an extraordinary charm in the conversation of the cavalier—it was like the current of a stream flowing on between deep and shady banks, profound, yet rapid and various, while ever and anon the sunshine breaks upon it through the trees, and lights it up for a space in all the sparkling

lustre of the day. At first her replies were brief and few, but gradually, she took a greater part in the discourse, answered at large, gave him her own thoughts in return for his, inquired as well as listened, and was won often to a smile. Thus they rode on for about two hours, the cavalier gaining more and more upon her, and to speak the truth, the high qualities of her heart and mind, winning from him as much admiration as her beauty and her grace commanded at the first sight.

Their progress, as before, was very slow, and once they had to pause for about a quarter of an hour, while the baggage of Lord Beverley's troop was brought forth from the village where he had left it, and added to that of the other party. At length, however, they came in sight of a small town lying on the slope of a hill, with, higher up towards the right, a detached house and some tall trees about it, standing in the midst of a park or very large meadow, surrounded by ancient brick walls.

At this point of their march Major Randal

rode back and spoke a few words to the earl, who replied, "Exactly as you like, major—I am under your command."

"Nay, my lord," replied the old officer, "I am under yours, you hold a higher commission."

"But with less experience, my good friend," answered the cavalier; "at all events, Major Randal, I will act by your advice, if you think we can reach Henley, well,—if not we will halt here."

"We might, if it were not for this lumbering baggage," answered the old soldier. "I cannot think what has made Lord Walton, who knows well what service is, cumber us with such stuff as this. A trooper should never have any baggage but his arms, a dozen crowns, and a clean shirt."

"You must not grumble, my good friend," replied the earl, dropping his voice. "If I understand Charles Walton rightly, there is that in those waggons which will be more serviceable to the king than all our broad-swords."

“ Ah, ah ! I understand,” said Major Randal. “ If that be so, we must take care of it, otherwise I think I should be inclined to pitch the whole into the first river. Well then, my lord, we will stop here, and as that is your house, I believe, you may sleep in your own sheets for one night. We will quarter the men in the village, and I will send out to see that the road is clear for our march to-morrow.”

“ I shall expect you to supper, however, major,” said the earl ; “ although I cannot tell whether there is any meat in the house, yet I know there is good old wine in the cellar, unless the Roundheads have got into it since I was there.”

“ If they have, you will not find a bottle,” replied Randal ; “ for notwithstanding all their hypocrisy, they drink as deep as cavaliers ; the only difference is, that they cant where the others swagger. But as for your wine, my lord, you must drink it yourself for me. I am an old campaigner, and my saloon is the parlour of the ale-house—I am more at home there,

than amongst gilt chairs and sideboards of plate."

"Good faith! you will find little of that in my house," replied the earl; "so come if you will: but in the mean time I will guide this fair lady up, and take some of the men with me to guard the house; for there is but a young girl and an old butler of seventy, who recollects Queen Elizabeth, left to take care of it. All the rest of my people are in the saddle."

"That's where they should be, my lord," replied Randal. "I will make your cornet quarter the men, as the place is yours, and will see you before I sleep, to plan our arrangements for to-morrow."

Thus saying, he rode on again; and the Earl of Beverley—after having given a few orders to his officers for the disposal of the force in the village, the guarding of the house, and the sending back of a small detachment to meet Lord Walton—rode up with his fair companion and her women, by a narrow,

wood-covered lane, to the house upon the hill.

The building was not very large, being one of the old fortified houses which were common in England at that time, and many of which during the civil wars stood regular siege by the parliamentary forces. Strong towers and buttresses, heavy walls, narrow windows, and one or two irregular outworks, gave it a peculiar character, which is only to be met with now in some of the old mansions which have come down from those times to the present, falling rapidly into decay, and generally applied to viler uses. As was then customary, and as was the case at Bishop's Merton, a wide terrace spread before the house, upon which the earl and his companions drew in their horses; and, before she dismounted, Miss Walton turned to gaze over the view, while the cavalier sprang to the ground, and, casting his rein to one of the troopers who had followed him, approached to aid her.

“The prospect is not so wide as at Bishop's

Merton, fair lady," said he; "but there is one object in it which will be as pleasant to your eye as any you could see at home. There comes your brother."

"I see a party of horse," said Annie Walton, "by the wood under the hill, but I cannot distinguish any of the figures."

"Oh, it is he, it is he!" cried her companion; "but I see no woman amongst them."

"Alas!" said Annie Walton, "what can have become of that poor girl?"

"It is strange, indeed," said the cavalier; "but yet, Miss Walton, she may have been alarmed, and fled while the fight was going on. If any injury had happened to her, had she been wounded or killed by a chance shot, she must have been found by this time."

"Oh, no; fear had nothing to do with it," replied Miss Walton; "she went through the midst of the fire to tell my brother of the path."

"Why he said it was yourself," rejoined Lord Beverley.

"We both went," replied Annie Walton; "but she seemed to have no fear, and I confess my heart beat like a very coward's."

"It is indeed strange," said the earl; "but yet, perhaps, your brother may have tidings. Let me assist you to alight;" and lifting her gently from the horse, he led her into the wide ancient hall, at the door of which stood the old butler, with his head shaking with age, but a glad look upon his countenance to see his lord once more returned.

From the hall, which felt chilly and damp, as if the door of the house had seldom been opened to the sunshine and free air, the earl conducted his companion up a flight of stone steps, and through some wide unfurnished corridors, to a part of the house which presented a more cheerful and habitable appearance, giving a glance from time to time at the countenance of Miss Walton, as if to see what effect the desolate aspect of the place would have upon her. Absorbed in other contemplations, however, she took no notice, and at

length the cavalier called her attention to it himself, saying, with a faint and somewhat sad smile—

“ You see, Miss Walton, what effect neglect can have. During my long absence from England everything has fallen into decay—more indeed in this house than in my dwelling in the north; but yet I reproach myself for having given way to the very mingled feelings that kept me from residing on my own land, and amongst my own people. It is not indeed the ruin and desolation that falls upon one’s property which a man ought to mind under such circumstances, but when a wealthy family dwells in the midst of its own tenantry, they build up a better mansion than any that is raised with hands, a nobler home than the lordly castle or the splendid palace. I mean that which is founded in the love and affection of friends and dependants, ornamented with kindly feelings and mutual benefits, obligations, gratitude, and esteem. And this is the house which falls into more horrible decay

during a long absence, than any of these things of brick or stone."

"I fear indeed it is so," said Miss Walton, walking on beside him into a large and handsome room, not only well furnished, but presenting some most beautiful pictures of the Italian school hanging upon the walls, while objects of virtu and instruments of music lay scattered over numerous tables, many of which were in themselves excessively costly.

"But it seems to me, my lord," she continued, "that in some respects your house and yourself are very much alike, though perhaps it is bold of me to say so; but now that I know who you really are, I feel as much inclined to look upon you as an old friend as you did in regard to me when first we met."

"Thanks, thanks, sweet lady," answered the earl. "Oh! regard me ever so. But if you mean that in my house and in myself there are desolate and ruined corners, you are mistaken. I am not one of those who have either some real and deep grief overshadowing

the heart for ever, or one of those who nourish a sentimental sorrow for nothing at all. There may be things in my own life that I regret—I may have lost dear friends and relations whom I mourn; but as the common course of events runs in this world, my life has been a very happy one, chequered, indeed, only by one terrible catastrophe, and by a great injury inflicted on my family by the king whom now I serve, which made me resolve like a foolish boy, as I then was, never to set foot in my native land while he remained in power. When I found that he was fallen, dispossessed, and in need, I came back in haste to serve him with that loyalty which I trust will long be the distinction of a British gentleman.”

“I did not exactly mean what you think,” replied Miss Walton; “I merely wished to remark that you seem sometimes as gay and cheerful as this room in which we now are, sometimes as sad and gloomy as the hall through which we lately passed.” She coloured a little as she spoke, from an indefinite

consciousness that the woman who remarks so closely the demeanour of a young and handsome man, may be well suspected of taking a deeper interest in him than she wished to believe she did in her companion.

The cavalier replied at once, however, without remarking the blush, "It must be so ever, Miss Walton, with those who feel and think. Is it not so with yourself? The spirit that God gives us is made for happiness, full of high aspirations, and bright capabilities of enjoyment; but it is placed in a world of trial and of difficulty, prisoned in a corporeal frame that checks and limits its exertions, chained down by cares and circumstances that burden its free energies. Whenever the load is not felt, whenever the walls of the dungeon are not seen, the captive gladly casts off the remembrance that such things exist, and rejoices in their absence. But ever and anon they present themselves to his eyes, or press upon his limbs, and he mourns under the weight that he cannot wholly cast off. But here

comes your brother ; and I will only add, that you shall see me sad no more, if you will bargain with me that you will be cheerful too."

In a few minutes Lord Walton himself entered the room ; but his countenance bespoke no good tidings of her he had been in search of. He had been unable to gain any information whatever, though he left no effort unmade ; and he was evidently deeply mortified and grieved, so that the next two hours passed in sadness upon all parts.

While the necessary arrangements were made for lodging the party in the house for the night, some occupation of a less sad character than the loss of poor Arrah Neil, was given to the thoughts of Miss Walton, by all the little inconveniences and difficulties attendant upon the sudden arrival of a large party in a mansion unprepared for their reception. Though accustomed through life to every sort of comfort, Annie Walton was not one to make much of trifles ; and she was

amused rather than otherwise at all the small annoyances, and at the dismay and embarrassment of her maids. When she returned from the rooms which had been assigned to her and her female companions, to that which was called in the house the picture-room, she found her brother conversing in the window with his friend, with a bright and cheerful countenance, which surprised her. The change was explained in a moment, however, by Charles Walton holding out a dirty strip of paper to her, and saying, "Here are news of our poor Arrah, Annie. She is safe, although I cannot tell where."

Annie took the scrap of paper, and read, merely observing as she did so, "This is not Arrah's hand: she writes beautifully."

The note ran as follows:—

"MY LORDE,—This is to tell you, as I heer that you have been a running after pretty Arrah Neil all the evening, that she is saif in this place, and as well as may be. I can't

come just at present, for reasons ; but I will be over with you by cock-crow to-morrow morning, and either bring her, if I can, or take you to her.—I subscribe myself, my lorde, your obedient servant to command,

“JOHN HURST.”

“Francis here,” said Lord Walton, when his sister had done reading, “has been laughing at me for the reputation which I have acquired of running after *pretty* Arrah Neil during the whole evening ; but I think I may set laughs at defiance regarding her, Annie ?”

“I thing so too,” answered Miss Walton, with a smile ; “but I wish we knew where she is.”

As often happens, however, when, in the midst of many cares and anxieties, one subject of alarm and grief is removed, all the rest are forgotten for the time, the news of poor Arrah’s safety restored the cheerfulness of all the party. We draw an augury of future happiness from each blessing that be-

falls us, from each relief that is afforded ; and it is not till new difficulties press upon us that apprehension resumes her sway.

Cheerfulness then returned to the party assembled in Lord Beverley's house ; they sat down to the pleasant evening meal, which closed a day of strife and danger, with hearts lightened, and expectations raised ; the merry voices of the troopers who were supping in the hall below, gave them warning how best to treat the cares of the time ; and if an anxiety or thought of the future did break in for a moment upon them, it was but to teach them to enjoy the present hour, inasmuch as no forethought or grave contemplation could affect the coming events. Lord Beverley exerted himself, without any apparent effort, to keep the conversation in its cheerful tone ; and when Miss Walton made some inquiries as to any danger or difficulty which might lie upon the march of the following day, he exclaimed gaily,—“ Away with such thoughts, fair lady : we have taken every precaution ;

we have done all that we can to guard against evil; we have true hearts and a good cause; and in trust of God's protection let us enjoy these hours of tranquillity. They are treasures, believe me, that are not often met with; let us gather them whilst we can. The best of husbandry, depend upon it, is to sift the corn from the chaff, to separate the gold from the dross in the portion of time that is allotted to us, and not to mingle the sorrow of to-morrow with the enjoyment of to-day. Come, Miss Walton," he added, "you must add to our present happiness by letting us hear once more that sweet voice in song, such as delighted me at Bishop's Merton."

"Nay, not to-night," said Annie Walton. "It is your turn now, my lord. By all these instruments of music, I am sure you sing yourself. Is it not so, Charles?"

"Beautifully!" replied Lord Walton; "and what is better than all, Annie, he requires no pressing."

"I will, with all my heart," replied the

cavalier, but upon one condition—that I am called no more my lord. Charles Walton and Francis Beverley have been too long brothers, for the sister of either to use so cold a term. What shall I sing? It must be of love in a lady's presence, otherwise were I no true knight;" and taking a large Venetian mandolin from the table behind him, he put it in tune, and sung—

Light of my life, my heart's intense desire,
Soul of my soul, thou blossom and thou beam;
Thou kindest day with more than summer's fire,
Thou bright'nest night like some celestial dream.

The sight of thee gives sunshine to my way,
Thy music breath brings rapture to my ear;
My thoughts thy thoughts, like willing slaves, obey,
Oh, thou most beautiful, oh, thou most dear!

One look of thine is worth a monarch's throne,
One smile from thee would raise the dying head;
One tear of thine would melt the heart of stone;
One kiss, one kiss, would vivify the dead.

Near thee the hours like moments fleet away ;

Absent, they linger heavy on the view :

In life, in death, oh, let me with thee stay !

Oh, thou most beautiful, most good, most true !

The voice was rich and mellow, with all the cultivation which the art of Italy could at that time bestow. There was no effort, there was nothing forced—every note seemed as much a part of the expression of the thought as the words in which it was clothed. But there was a fire, a warmth, an enthusiasm in the singer, which gave full depth and power to the whole. It was impossible to see him and to hear him without forgetting that he was singing a song composed probably long before, and without believing that he was giving voice, in the only way his feelings would permit, to the sensations of the moment.

Annie Walton knew not why, but her heart beat quickly as she sat and listened, the long black eyelashes of her beautiful eyes remained

sunk towards the ground, and her fair cheek became pale as marble. She would fain have looked up when the song was done, she would fain have thanked the cavalier, and expressed her admiration of his music ; but she could do neither, and remained perfectly silent, while her brother remarked the emotion which she felt, and turned his eyes with a smile from her countenance to that of his friend.

But the earl, too, had fallen into thought, and, with his hand leaning upon the mandolin, which he had suffered to drop by his knee till it reached the floor, seemed gazing upon the frets, as if the straight lines of ivory contained some matter of serious contemplation. Miss Walton coloured as she marked the silence, and, looking suddenly up, said one or two common-place words, which at once betrayed an effort. They served, however, to renew the conversation again.

Another and another song succeeded, and, after about an hour spent in this manner, the party separated and retired to rest, while

Annie Walton asked herself, with an agitated breast, "What is the meaning of this?" The sensations were new to her, and for more than an hour they banished sleep from her pillow.

CHAPTER IX.

WE must now change the scene, and, without much consideration of the “pathos and bathos delightful to see,” must remove the reader from the higher and more refined society of Lord Walton, his sister, and the Earl of Beverley, to the small sanded parlour of the little alehouse in the village. We must also advance in point of time for about three hours, and put the hour hand of the clock midway between the figures one and two, while the minute hand was quietly passing over the six. All was still in the place; the soldiery were taking their brief repose, except a sentinel who walked up and down, pistol in hand, at each entrance of the village; and the villagers

themselves, having recovered from the excitement caused by the arrival of the party, and the drinking and merriment which followed it, had taken possession of such beds as the troopers left them, and were enjoying the sweet but hard-earned slumber of daily labour.

Two living creatures occupied the parlour of the alehouse : a large tabby cat, who—as if afraid that the mice upon which she waged such interminable and strategetic war' might take advantage of her own slumbers to surprise her—had mounted upon a three-legged stool, and was enjoying her dreams in peace, curled up in a comfortable ball ; and Captain Barecolt, who, seated in a wooden arm-chair with his long leg-bones, still in their immemorial boots, stretched upon another, kept watch, if such it could be called, with a large jug of ale beside him, from which he took every now and then deep draughts, for the purpose, as he mentally declared, “ of keeping himself awake.”

The effect was not exactly such as he expected, for from time to time he fell into a doze, from which a sort of drowsy consciousness of the proximity of the ale roused him up every quarter of an hour, to make a new application to the tankard. At length, feeling that these naps were becoming longer, he drew his legs off the chair, muttering—

“This won’t do! I shall have that dried herring, Randal, upon me; I must take a pipe, and smoke it out.”

And thereupon he moved hither and thither in the parlour, looking for the implements necessary in the operation to which he was about to apply himself. These were speedily found, and a few whiffs soon enveloped him in a cloud as thick as that in which Homer’s Jove was accustomed to enshrine himself on solemn occasions; and, in the midst of this, the worthy captain continued ruminating upon the mighty deeds he had done and was to do.

He thought over the past, and congratulated himself upon his vast renown; for Cap-

tain Barecolt was one of those happy men who have a facility of believing their own fictions. He was convinced, that if he could but count them up, he had performed more feats of valour, and slaughtered more bloody enemies than Amadis de Gaul, Launcelot of the Lake, the Admiral de Coligni, or the Duke of Alva. It was true, he thought such events soon passed from the minds of great men, being common occurrences with them, so that he could not remember one half of what he had done, which he only regretted for the sake of society; but he was quite sure that whenever opportunities served he should be found superior to any of the great captains of the age, and that merit and time must lead him to the highest distinction. This led him on to futurity, and he made up his mind, that the first thing he would do should be, to save the king's life when attacked on every side by fifteen or sixteen horsemen. For this, of course, he would be knighted on the spot, and receive the command of a regiment of horse,

with which he proposed to march at once to London, depose the lord mayor, and, proceeding to the parliament-house, dissolve the parliament, seize the speaker and twelve of the principal members, and hang Sir Harry Vane. This, he thought, would be work enough for one day; but the next morning he would march out with all the cavaliers he could collect, defeat the Earl of Essex on one side, rout Waller on the other, and then, with his prisoners, proceed to head-quarters, where, of course, he would be appointed general-in-chief, and in that capacity would bring the king to London.

What he would do next was a matter of serious consideration, for the war being at an end, Othello's occupation was gone; and as, during all this time, he had made sundry applications to his friend the tankard, his imagination was becoming somewhat heavy on the wing, so that in a minute or two after he fell sound asleep, while the pipe dropped un-

noticed from his hand, and fractured its collar-bone upon the floor.

He had scarcely been asleep ten minutes, when the door of the room slowly opened, and a round head covered with short curls was thrust in, with part of a burly pair of shoulders. The door was then pushed partly open, and in walked a stout man in a good brown coat, who, advancing quietly to the side of Captain Deciduous Barecolt, laid his hand upon his arm. Now, what Captain Barecolt was dreaming of at that moment, it is impossible for the author of these pages to tell ; but his vision would appear to have been pugnacious, for the instant the intruder's grasp touched his left arm, he started up, and, stretching out his right hand to a pistol which lay between the tankard and himself on the table, snatched it up, levelled it at the head of his visitor, and pulled the trigger.

Luckily for the brains, such as they were, of poor John Hurst (for he was the person who had entered), in the last unsteady pota-

tions of the bellicose captain, a few drops of ale had been spilt upon the pan of the deadly weapon ; and, though the flint struck fire, no flash succeeded, much to the astonishment of Barecolt, and the relief of his companion.

“ D—n the man !” cried Hurst, reeling back in terror ; “ what art thou about ? Dost thou go to shoot a man without asking, ‘ with your leave, or by your leave ? ’ ”

“ Never wake a sleeping tiger !” exclaimed Barecolt, with a graceful wave of his hand. “ You may think yourself profoundly lucky, master yeoman, that you have got as much brains left in that round box of yours as will serve to till your farm ; for this hand never yet missed anything within shot of a pistol or reach of a sword. I remember very well once, in the island of Sardinia, a Corsican thought fit to compare his nose to mine, upon which I told him that the first time we met I would leave him no nose to boast of. He being a wise man, kept ever after out of reach of my hands ; but one day, when he thought

himself in security upon a high bank, he called out to me—‘Ha! ha! capitaine, I have got my nose still!’ upon which, drawing out my pistol, I aimed at his face, and, though the distance was full a hundred yards, with the first shot I cut off his proboscis at the root, so that it dropped down upon the road, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket.”

“It must have been somewhat thin in the stalk,” said Hurst; “no good stout English nose, I warrant you. But come, captain, you must take me up to my lord. The sentry passed me on to you, and I want help directly, for there is a nest of Roundheads not five miles from here, who have got that poor little girl in their hands, and are brewing mischief against us to-morrow. Half a dozen men may take them to-night, but we may have hard work of it if we wait till daylight.”

Captain Barecolt paused and meditated; a glorious opportunity of buying distinction cheap seemed now before him, and the only difficulty was, how to keep it all in his own hands.

“I cannot disturb the commander,” he said, in a solemn tone, after a few minutes’ consideration ; “that’s quite impossible, my friend. Faith, if you want help, you must be content with mine and half a dozen soldiers of my troop. I am a poor creature, it is true,” he continued, in a tone of affected modesty, “and not able to do so much service as some men. I never killed above seventeen enemies in a day ; and the best thing I have to boast of is, having blown up a fort containing three hundred men with my own unassisted hand. However, what poor aid I can give, you may command. We will take six picked men with us, if that be enough, you and I will make eight, and if there be not more than a hundred and fifty of the enemy, I think we could manage.”

“A hundred and fifty!” cried Hurst. “Why, there are but seven, and one of them is not a fighting man.”

“Whom may they be?” asked Barecolt, in a solemn tone ; “if there be but seven, we

shall have no need of any men; I will go alone. Who may they be?"

"Why, there's that Captain Batten, whom my lord took away prisoner, I hear," replied Hurst; "then there's a Dr. Bastwick, a parliamentary committee man; then there's old Dry, of Longsoaken, who dragged away the girl while you were all fighting at the bridge; the other four are, I hear, common councilmen of Coventry, though they are all decked out in buff and bandolier, as if they were fire-eating soldiers just come from the wars. They were laying a plan before they went to bed for bringing troops from Coventry round about my lord and his men, while two regiments of Essex's, that are marching into the north, were to have warning, and cut off the retreat."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Captain Barecolt, "we will cut off theirs. Have you got a horse, master yeoman? I think yours was killed in the field?"

"Ay, that it was," answered Hurst, "to my

loss and sorrow ; as good a beast as was ever crossed, and cost me twenty pound."

"We will mount you, we will mount you," said the captain ; "there are a dozen and more good horses which forgot their riders yesterday, and left them lying by the bridge. We may as well have half a dozen men with us, however, just to tie the prisoners, for that is not work for gentlemen ; so you sit down and take a glass of ale, and I will get all things ready."

In the course of about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, Captain Barecolt had called to his aid eight men of the troop whom he could most depend upon ; and after having brought down Major Randal's cornet to take his post during his absence, and mounted good John Hurst on the horse of a trooper who had been killed the day before, he led the way out of the little town, and, guided by the yeoman across the country, advanced slowly towards another village situated in the plain about five or six miles from that in which they had taken up their quarters. The country was open,

without woods or hedges, but the night was profoundly dark, and the wind sighing in long gusts over the open fields. Nothing was to be seen except the glimmer of a piece of water here and there, till they approached the village to which their steps were bent ; when one or two lights became visible amongst the houses, as if, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour all the inhabitants had not yet retired to rest. One of these lights, too, as if proceeding from a lantern, appeared moving about in the gardens ; and Captain Barecolt, turning to Hurst, asked him, in a low voice—

“What is the meaning of those lights?”

“I don’t know,” answered the yeoman.
“It was all dark when I crept away.”

“We shall soon see,” rejoined Barecolt.
“You are sure there are no troops in the place?”

“There were none when I left it,” replied Hurst ; but almost as he spoke, a loud voice exclaimed—

“Stand ! Who goes there?”

"A friend," answered Barecolt.

"Stand! and give the word," repeated the voice, and at the same moment, a small red spot of fire, as if produced by a man blowing a match, appeared immediately before them; and Barecolt, spurring on his horse, found himself in the presence of a matchlock man, at whose head he aimed a cut with his heavy sword, which rang sharply upon a steel cap, and brought the man upon his knee.

"He fired his piece, however, but he missed his mark, and threw down the gun, while Barecolt, catching him by the shoulder, put his sword to his throat, exclaiming—

"Yield, or you are a dead man!"

The sentinel had no hesitation on the subject, having already received a sharp wound on the head, which left him little inclination to court more.

"Now, tell me who is in the village," exclaimed Barecolt: "and see you tell truth, for your life depends upon it."

"Three companies of Colonel Harris's re-

giment," answered the soldier, "and a troop of Lord Essex's own horse."

"The number?" demanded Barecolt.

"Four hundred foot, and a hundred troopers," replied the man; and having a little recovered from his first apprehension, he demanded—"Whom may you be?"

"My name is Johnson," answered Barecolt, readily, "first captain of Sir Nicholas Jarvis's regiment of horse, marching up to join the Earl of Beverley and Lord Walton at Hendon, near Coventry. We thought they were quartered in this village: whereabout do they lie?"

"Oh, no," answered the man, "they are five miles to the east we hear, and we were to attack them on the march to-morrow."

"Are you telling me the truth?" said Barecolt, in a stern tone; "but I will make sure of that, for I will take you with me to Sir Nicholas Jarvis, and if we find you have cheated us as to where they lie, you shall be shot to-morrow at daybreak. Tie his hands some of you —— hark! there is a drum!

There, curse him, let him go, we have no time to spare ; I must get back to Sir Nicholas, and let him know we are on the wrong road."

Thus saying, he turned his horse and rode away, followed by the rest of his party ; while the tramp of men coming down fast from the village was heard behind them.

The reader need not be told that Captain Barecolt never had the slightest intention of carrying off the wounded sentinel with him ; for having filled him with false intelligence regarding the march of his imaginary regiment, he was very glad to leave him behind to communicate it to his fellows in the place. In the mean while, he himself gave orders for putting the horses into a quick trot, and returning with all speed to the village ; where, without communicating any tidings he had gained to any one, he left his men, and hurried up with Hurst to the mansion on the hill.

The earl and Lord Walton were immediately called up, and Barecolt, being admitted to their presence, made his statement. We are

by no means so rash as to assert, that the account he gave was altogether true, for Captain Deciduous Barecolt, much more skilful than the writer of this tale, never lost sight of his hero, and his hero was always himself; but, at all events, the intelligence he brought of the enemy was accurate enough, and the stratagem he had used to deceive the foe, was also told correctly and received great commendation. He was sent down immediately, however, to call Major Randal to the council, and, in the mean time, the two young noblemen eagerly questioned Hurst as to what he had seen and heard amongst the adverse party.

The good yeoman's tale was told briefly and simply, and showed the following facts. After his horse had been killed, he had carried off his saddle and the other worldly goods which he possessed; and finding that, without being of any service to his party, he was in imminent danger of losing his own life from the stray shots that were flying about in different

directions, he made the best of his way to the back of the little mound we have mentioned, and thence peeped out to see the progress of the fight. Perceiving at one time, as he imagined, the small force of Royalists wavering in their attack upon the musketeers, he judged it expedient, lest his friends should be defeated, to put a greater distance between himself and the enemy; and taking all the articles that were most valuable to him out of the saddle, he left it behind him, and hurried on for about a mile farther, where he took up his position in a ditch. While thus ensconced, he saw the well-known form of Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, together with that of another gentleman, whom he afterwards found to be Captain Batten. Between these two appeared poor Arrah Neil, of whose arm Dry retained a firm grasp, while he held a pistol in his right hand, under the authority of which he seemed to be hurrying her on unresistingly.

In about a quarter of an hour more, some fugitive musketeers ran by as fast as they

could go ; and shortly after, several of Major Randal's troopers appeared in pursuit ; but as Hurst was unacquainted with the soldiers, he prudently resolved to lie concealed where he was till some of his lord's followers should come up, which he calculated would be shortly the case, fearing he might be taken for one of the enemy, or at all events that he might be plundered by a friend—an operation as common in those days as in the present, though then it was done with pistol and broadsword, and now, in general, with pen and ink.

Towards the end of the day some of Lord Walton's men did appear, and spoke a word to him in passing, from which he gathered that they were searching for Arrah Neil ; but with the usual acuteness of persons sent upon a search, they rode on without waiting for any information he could give. Having marked the road which Dry and his companions had taken, Hurst then determined to follow them, and made his way to the village, in which

they halted for the night. His plan had proved successful, he said; he had found the two parliamentary committee-men, together with Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, lodged in a house in the village, and boldly seeking out Dry, he gave him to understand that he had been taken by Lord Walton to join the king against his will, and was now making the best of his way home. He affected some fear of being overtaken; and in order to reassure him, Dry and Dr. Bastwick communicated to him the intelligence they received in the course of the evening from the men of Coventry, in regard to the movement of parliamentary forces. This took place some hours subsequent, however, to the despatch of his note to Lord Walton, and he could not make his escape from the village, in order to carry more accurate tidings to his young landlord, till Dry and the rest had retired to bed.

As soon as Major Randal arrived, a hasty consultation was held, to ascertain the course

of proceedings which it would be expedient to follow. It was determined, notwithstanding great reluctance on the part of Lord Walton, to leave poor Arrah Neil in the hands of Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, that the march should be immediately commenced ; and orders were given to that effect, which at once produced all the bustle and confusion of hasty departure. Miss Walton was called up, and, dressing herself hastily, was soon placed upon horseback once more, for it was determined to leave the carriages behind ; and in about an hour the two noblemen and their followers, with Major Randal's troop, were marching on, in the gray of the dawn, directing their steps towards Coventry. A small guard was left over the prisoners, with orders to remain behind about an hour, and then to leave them and follow with all speed, in order that the departure of the troops might be accomplished as secretly as possible. No trumpet was sounded ; and if it had been possible to carry out King Lear's plan, and shoe

a troop of horse with felt, it would have been upon the present occasion.

Though that could not be accomplished, all their proceedings were conducted with as much silence as possible ; and Miss Walton, riding between her brother and the Earl of Beverley, had plenty of time for thought. The sky had changed from gray to purple and gold ; the expanse of the heavens had lost its glorious hues, as the sun rose up above the horizon ; and the morning of a somewhat dull and heavy day had fully dawned ere any one spoke, except, indeed, when the few short words of command and direction were necessary. The countenance of Lord Walton was grave, and even sad ; and his sister, who watched it with some anxiety, at length inquired—

“ Do you anticipate any great danger, Charles ? You look very gloomy.”

“ Oh no, dearest Annie,” he answered ; “ I think we are so far before our enemies that we shall without doubt be able to join the

king before they are aware of our departure. But I cannot think of being obliged to leave that poor girl in the hands of that old hypocrite, Dry, without feeling very sad. If he treat her ill, woe be to him should he and I ever meet again ; but I trust he will be afraid to endanger his sanctified reputation. That is my only hope.

The earl now joined in with that tone of calm cheerfulness which is the most persuasive of hope ; and with the peculiar charms of his conversation, and the continual and brilliant variety which it displayed, led the thoughts of his companions to happier themes, and almost made them believe that brighter days were before them. Since the preceding night his manner had much changed towards Miss Walton : there was a tenderness in it, a softness, a tone which can only be called the tone of love ; and though both were more silent than they previously had been, yet each, in that silence, was thinking of the other, and it is very dangerous so to do, unless we are

disposed to yield to feelings which in the end may master us altogether. Coquetry may talk, may carry on uninterrupted observation and reply; indifference may pursue the calm and easy current of conversation; and avowed and satisfied love may hold unbroken communion upon all the many subjects of thought and imagination; but in its early day true passion is fitful in its eloquence, full of silence and interruptions, for it is full of thought; and the voice of feeling is often the strongest when the lips are motionless and the tongue is mute.

But we will dwell no more upon such matters, for we have action before us instead of thought, deeds rather than sensations. After a march of about four hours, and a short pause for refreshment, the advanced party of the troop was seen to halt upon a small eminence, while one of the troopers rode back at full speed, bringing the intelligence that they descried a considerable body of men drawn up at a short distance from Coventry.

“Are we so near?” said Miss Walton.

“ Within three miles,” replied the earl. “ That is the spire of St. Michael’s church rising over the slope. You will see the city as soon as we pass the rise. Think you these are the king’s troops, Major Randal ?”

“ Ay, such troops as they are,” answered the old officer ; “ we must have more and better before we do much service.”

“ It will be as well to despatch some one to see,” said Lord Walton. “ I will send two of my servants, major. Here, Langan and Hartup, ride on with all speed, and bring me back news of the people who are before Coventry. I cannot divine why the king should halt before the gates.”

“ There may be rogues within,” said Major Randal. And so it proved ; for on their arrival at the top of the slope, where Coventry, with its wide walls and beautiful spires, rose fair before them, they saw a fire of musketry opened from the city upon a small party of royalist troops, which approached too near the gates.

Marching rapidly on, as soon as it was ascertained that the force they saw was that of Charles himself, they soon reached the monarch's army, if so it could be called, and Annie Walton found herself in the midst of a new and animated scene.

The king's face expressed much grief and vexation, as, sitting upon a powerful horse, he consulted with some of his principal officers as to what was to be done on the rebellious refusal of Coventry to give him admission. But when he turned to receive the little reinforcement which now joined him, his countenance assumed a glad and cheerful look; and as Lord Walton, dismounting, approached his stirrup, he held out his hand to him graciously, saying—

“Those are kind friends and loyal subjects, indeed, my lord, who rally round their sovereign when more favoured men forsake him. Your own presence, my good sir, is the best answer you could give to my letters. We must retreat, I fear, however, from before

these inhospitable walls, for we have no cannon to blow open their gates, and even if I had, I could wish to spare my subjects.

“Ah! sire,” said Major Randal, who had also advanced to the king’s side, “when subjects draw the sword against their king, both parties should throw away the scabbard, for it is the blade must decide all.”

“Too rough, and yet too true,” said his Majesty; and after a few more words addressed to Lord Beverley and Miss Walton, the king turned his horse and rode off with his attendants towards Stonely, leaving the small force by which he was accompanied to follow.

CHAPTER X.

THREE or four days had elapsed, and the party in whose fate we have interested ourselves had reached the town of Nottingham in safety; but gloom and despondency hung over the court of the king, over the small force at his command, and over the whole city. Proclamation had been made for all loyal subjects to join the monarch in Nottingham; and it had been announced on that day, the 25th of August, 1642, that Charles would set up his royal standard against his rebellious parliament. Few persons, however, joined him—not a single regiment of foot had been raised—the body of horse which he had led to Coventry, had been little increased since he

had retreated from that city—the artillery and ammunition from York had not yet arrived—and sadness was upon every brow, and apprehension in every heart.

The evening was dark and gloomy, the wind rising in sharp and howling gusts, a few large drops of rain were borne upon the blast, and everything promised a night of tempest, when the king, accompanied by all the noblemen and gentlemen who had joined him, set out on horseback for the hill on which stands the old castle of Nottingham, with the knight marshal before him bearing the royal standard, and a small body of the train bands accompanying it as a guard. On reaching the spot destined for the ceremony, the standard pole was fixed with great difficulty, amidst the roll of the drum and the loud blasts of the trumpet. But neither the war-stirring sound of the drum, nor the inspiring voice of the trumpet could cheer the hearts of those around, or give them confidence even in the success of a good cause; and, with the same

sadness with which they had gone thither, the royal party returned from the castle hill just as the evening was growing grey with night.

Some four or five hours after, Lord Walton, who had participated fully in the gloomy feelings which pervaded the whole court, rose from the supper table at which he had been seated with his sister, the Earl of Beverley, and one or two friends who had joined them in Nottingham, and saying—

“My head aches, dearest Annie; I will walk up to the castle hill, and take a look at the standard. The air will do me good.”

“I will go with you, Charles,” said Miss Walton, rising. “I will not keep you a minute.”

“Nay, not in such a night as this, Annie,” answered her brother. “Do you not hear how the wind blows, as if it would force in those rattling casements.”

“Oh, I mind not the wind,” replied Annie Walton; “you shall lend me your arm,

Charles ; it will always be strong enough to steady your sister's steps."

"God grant it, dear one," replied Lord Walton. "Well, come ! I do wish to talk with you, Annie, upon many things;" and in a few minutes they were in the streets of Nottingham.

The wind was even more strong than they had expected, but the tall houses of the good old town, though exposed by its position to the blasts, gave them some shelter ; and as they walked along, Lord Walton, after a few minutes' silence, put his right hand upon his sister's, which grasped his arm, and said, "I wish to speak to you of the future, dear one. Danger and strife are before me. It is impossible for you to follow the movements of an army, and therefore I wish, before I march hence, to take you to the house of our good old cousin, Lady Margaret Langley, where you may rest in safety."

"I will go, Charles, if you wish it," replied Miss Walton ; "but it must be only upon the

condition that no restraint be put upon my movements, and that whenever there is a pause in the war, I may be allowed to follow, and be near you."

"Of course, dear sister," replied her brother, "I don't pretend to restrain you in anything. Annie. You are old enough, and wise enough, and good enough, to decide entirely upon your own actions. You must keep several of the servants with you to guard you and protect you wherever you go. You must also have a sufficient sum to put you above any circumstances of difficulty, whatever you may think fit to do."

"Oh! I have the jewels, you know, Charles," said Miss Walton, "and more money of my own with me than will be needful."

"Well, we will see to that hereafter," said Lord Walton; "but there is another subject on which I would speak to you. No one can tell what may be the chance of war. I may go safely through the whole of this sad strife, and see the end of it. I may fall the first

shot that is fired. But if I do, Annie, you will need some strong arm and powerful mind to protect and support you. In that case, I would leave you, as a legacy, as a trust, as a charge, to the best friend I have on earth,—the oldest, the dearest.—Francis Beverley loves you, Annie.”

“Hush! oh, hush! Charles,” cried Miss Walton, and he felt her hand tremble upon his arm.

“Nay, sweet sister,” continued her brother, “I asked you for no confessions. Your tale is told already, dear girl. All I ask is, will you, when I am gone, without reserve or woman’s vain reluctance, trust in him, rely on him, as you do on me?”

His sister was silent for a moment, and he repeated—“Will you, Annie, forget all coyness, all unkind and ungenerous diffidence, and, recollecting he has been a brother to your brother, confide in him as such?”

Annie Walton paused again for a single instant, and then, with her face bent down,

though no one could see her glowing cheek in the darkness, she murmured, "I will."

Lord Walton pressed her hand in his, and then in silence led the way up to the hill.

It was with difficulty that they ascended, so fierce were the gusts of wind; but the very violence of the blast scattered from time to time the drifting clouds, and the moon occasionally looked forth and cast a wavering light upon their path. Not a soul, however, did they meet in their way; all was still and silent but the howling of the tempest, till, at length, when they reached the top, the voice of a sentinel exclaimed as usual,—“Stand! Who goes there?”

“A friend,” replied Lord Walton; and before the man could demand it, he gave the word for the night, saying, “The crown.”

“Pass!” replied the sentinel; and he walked on with his sister clinging to his arm.

The moon shone out again; and Miss Walton and her brother both gazed forwards

towards the spot where the standard had stood. They could not see it; and hurrying on their steps, they found four or five of the train band standing round the place. The standard itself was lying flat upon the ground.

In answer to Lord Walton's questions, the men informed him, that the wind had blown it down, and that they found it was impossible to raise it again; and turning sadly away, the young nobleman murmured in a low voice to his sister, "God send this be not an omen of our royal master's fate!"

CHAPTER XI.

IN a small tavern at Nottingham was a large but low-roofed room—with the heavy beams, blackened by smoke, almost touching the heads of some of the taller guests—in which, on the night after that of which we have just spoken, were assembled as many persons as it could well contain; and a strange scene of confusion it presented. Hats and feathers, swords and daggers, pipes and glasses, bottles and plates, big men and little, men of war and men of peace; an atmosphere composed of smoke, of the fumes of wine, the smell of stong waters and of beer, and the odour of several large pieces of roast meat, together with sounds of innumerable kinds, — oaths,

eries for the tapster and the boy, loud laughter, low murmurs, the hoarse accusation, the fierce rejoinder, the sustained discussion, the prosy tale, and the dull snore, as well as the half-drunken song, had all their place in the apartment, which might well have been supposed the tap-room of the tower of Babel. The house was, in short, a place of resort for the lower order of cavaliers, and the hour that at which the greater part, having supped, were betaking themselves to their drink with the laudable determination, then but too common, of leaving themselves as little wit as possible till the next morning.

“*Basta, basta!* It sufficeth!” cried a tall man with a peculiarly constructed nose. “I would find the good youth if he were in a hundred Hulls. What’s Hull to me? or I to Hull? as the poet says. I know, if I can bring the girl back out of his clutches, where a hundred crowns are to be got. We have open hands amongst us; but mark me, master,

if you are deceiving me, I will cut your ears off."

The man whom he addressed was a small, sharp-eyed man, reddish in the hair and pale about the gills; but he answered stoutly, "That's what you dare not, Master Barecolt."

"Dare not!" cried Barecolt, seizing a knife that lay upon the table, and starting up with an ominous look—"Dare not! What is it that I dare not? Now, look you, repeat that word again, and you shall go forth from this room with no more ears than a grinder's cur. Dare not! thou small chandler, I could break you across my knee like a piece of rotten wood."

There was some truth in what he said, and the small man felt the force of that truth, so that he thought it expedient to lower his tone.

"I meant I would take the law of you if you did," he said; "so no more of cutting off ears, Master Barecolt, for we have sharp justices in Nottingham. But what I said is very true. I know old Dry very well—have

known him, indeed, these twelve years. When first he used to come to Hull to buy goods of the Hamburgers, I had a shop there, where he used to stop and take a glass of cinnamon now and then. But he has grown a great man now, and would hardly notice an old acquaintance, especially as he was riding with men of war."

"And you are sure he had a woman with him?" asked Barecolt, resuming his seat and filling his glass.

"A sort of girl, mayhap some sixteen years of age," answered his companion. "She looked somewhat rueful too, with her eyes cast down upon the ground as she rode along."

"That's she," replied Barecolt; "'tis beyond all doubt. What does the dried herring at Hull, I wonder?—Let me see. It would take some threescore men to capture Hull, I doubt?"

"Three score!" exclaimed the other; "some thirty thousand, you mean."

Barecolt gave him a look of unutterable contempt. "Four petards," he said, continuing his own calculations in an under tone, "for the outer gate, the bridge, the inner gate, and one to spare—ha—threescore men—half must be musketeers—Well, there is Hughes's company. I will do it."

"You had better not try," answered his companion. "I could tell you a much better plan, if you would strike a bargain in an honest way, and give me half the reward for finding this young woman, as you say there are great folks looking after her."

"Half the reward, thou little Carthaginian!" exclaimed Barecolt. "By my faith! if you have half the reward, you shall have the danger too; and a quarter of it would turn your liver as white as a hen pigeon's."

"Why, I will save you all danger, if you will listen to me," answered the small gentleman. "I will tell you my plan, and you shall judge, and whatever risk there is, I will share readily enough. I know all the houses that

Dry frequents in Hull; all his haunts, from the store where he used to buy dried beef and neat's tongues salted, to the shop where he used to take the fourth glass of strong waters. If you will put off your swagger and your feathers, clothe yourself like a puritan, and walk demurely, we will take two companions, slip into Hull with a couple of horse-loads of drapery, find out where Master Dry lodges, and while I busy him with a little speculation in his own way, by which I can easily make him believe that he will fill his pockets, you can deal with the girl, and get her out of the city."

"Clothe myself like a puritan," said Barecolt, thoughtfully, "that is the only difficult part of the affair; for unless I steal old Major Randall's suit of black, where I am to get a pious doublet I know not. The fifty crowns Lord Walton gave me have been spent on this new bravery, and sundry pottle pots, together with things that shall be nameless, friend Tibbets; but, by my faith! I will go

and ask the good lord for more. He will not grudge the pistoles if we can get Mistress Arrah back again to him. He's as fond of her as a hen of her chickens,—yet all in honour, Master Tibbets—all in honour, upon my life. I will go this minute, as soon as I have finished this pint ;” and again he filled his glass, and drained it at a draught.

He then rose from his seat, and was in the act of saying, “Wait here for me, and I will be back in a minute,” when an officer was seen dimly through the smoke, entering by the door on the other side of the room. After gazing round for a moment, from table to table, he exclaimed aloud, “Is one Captain Barecolt here? He is wanted by the king.”

“I knew it!” cried Barecolt, giving a towering look at Master Tibbets. “I was sure of it—my great services—Sir, my name is Barecolt, and your very humble servant.”

The officer gazed at him with a look of some consideration and surprise,—“My good friend,” he said, “you seem scarcely fit to

obey the king's summons. You have been drinking."

"So does his majesty, I wot, when he is thirsty," replied Barecolt, nothing abashed ; "but if it be of proportions you speak—if it be quantity which makes the difference, I will soon remedy the amount of wine within, by the application of water without. I am not drunk, sir ; I never was drunk in my life. No, sir, nor was I ever the worse for liquor, as it is termed, though often much the better for it. But whenever I find my eyes a little misty, and see a fringe round the candles ; or feel the floor move in an unusual manner, or the cups dance without any one touching them, I have a secret for remedying such irregularities, which secret lies, like truth, in the bottom of a well. Hold—Tapster.—I have drunk wine enough to-night to justify me in calling for water, even in a tavern.—Tapster, I say, get me a bucket of cold water from the pump, and put it down before the door, then bring a napkin to take off the superfluous. I remem-

ber when I was in the Palatinate going to see the great tun——”

“Sir, we have no time for tales,” said the officer drily; “the king waits. Make yourself as sober as you can, and as speedily as possible.”

“Sir, I am with you in an instant,” rejoined Barecolt. “Master Tibbets, wait here till I come back. You can finish the tankard for me; it is paid for.”

Thus saying, he went forth, and returned in a few minutes, buttoning up his collar, with his scattered hair somewhat dishevelled and dripping; and, saying he was ready, he followed the officer, making another sign to Tibbets to wait for his return.

“Who is that fellow?”

“What the devil can the king want with him?”

“Why, it’s Captain Barecolt, of Randal’s.”

“I think the king might have chosen a better man.”

“That’s a lie. There is not a better man in the service.”

“He’s a bragging fool.”

“I dare say a coward too.”

“No, no, no coward, for all his brags.”

Such were some of the observations which followed Barecolt’s departure with the officer, while they wended on their way through the streets of Nottingham to the king’s lodging, whither we shall take leave to follow them. The style and semblance of a court was kept up long after the royal authority was gone; and in the first room which Barecolt entered were a number of servants and attendants. Beyond that was a vacant chamber, and then a small ante-room, in which a pale boy, in a page’s dress, sat reading by a lamp. He looked up, as the captain and his conductor appeared, but did not offer to move till the officer told him to go in, and say to his majesty, that Captain Barecolt was in attendance; on which he rose, opened a door opposite, and knocked at a second, which

appeared within. Voices were heard speaking; and, after a moment's pause, the boy repeated the signal, when the door was opened, and he made the announcement.

"Let him wait," was the reply; and for about twenty minutes the worthy captain remained, his head getting each moment cooler, and freer from the fumes of the wine; but his fancy only became the more active and rampant, and running away with him over the open plain of possibility, without the slightest heed of whither she was carrying her rider. Having already given the reader a sample of her doings with Captain Barecolt in a preceding chapter, we will spare him on the present occasion, especially as it would take much more time to recount her vagaries in the good gentleman's brain than it did for her to enact them.

At length the door opened, and a voice pronounced the words, "Captain Barecolt!" at which sound the captain advanced, and entered, not without some trepidation—for there

is something in majesty, even when shorn of its beams, that is not to be lightlied by common men.

The king was seated at a table in a small room, with lights and papers before him, and three or four gentlemen were standing round, of whom Barecolt knew but one, even by sight. That one was the Earl of Beverley, who, with a packet of letters in his hand, stood a little behind and on the right of the king. The monarch wore his hat and plume, and the full light was shining on his fine melancholy features, which looked more sad rather than more cheerful for a faint smile that was passing over his lip. His fair right hand lay upon the table, with the fingers clasped round a roll of papers, upon which they closed and opened more than once, while Barecolt advanced to the end of the table with a low bow ; and the monarch gazed at him attentively for a few moments.

“Your name is Barecolt?” asked the king at length.

"It is, may it please your majesty," replied the captain.

"You have been much in France, I think?" continued Charles.

"Many years, sire," answered the soldier, "and speak the language as my own."

"Good!" said the king. "With what parts of the country are you most acquainted?"

"With all parts, your majesty," rejoined the captain, who was beginning to recover his loquacity, which had been somewhat checked by the first effect of the king's presence. "I have been in the north, sire, where I fought against Fuentez; and I have travelled all over the ground round Paris. I know every part of Picardy and the Isle of France. Normandy, too, I have run through in every direction, and could find my way from Caudabec to Alençon with my eyes blindfolded. Poitou and Main I am thoroughly conversant with; and know all the towns on the Loire and in the Orleanois — the

passes of the Cevennes, the Forez, and the Vivarais."

But Charles waved his hand, saying, "Enough ! enough ! Now, tell me, if you were landed on the coast of Normandy—say at Pont au-de-Mer—and had to make your way secretly to Paris, what course would you take ?"

"Please your majesty, Pont au-de-Mer is not a seaport," replied Barecolt. The king smiled, and Barecolt continued—"I know it well, and a pretty little town it is, upon the Rille."

"Well, well," said the king ; "suppose you were landed at Harfleur, then,—I did but wish to try [you, sir,—how would you direct your course for Paris from Harfleur ?"

"If I were to go secretly, may it please your majesty," was the reply, "I do not think I should go near Pont au-de-Mer at all, for then I must pass through Rouen, where they are cute and cunning, ask all sorts of questions, and look to passes sharply. No ; I would

rather take a little round by Lisieux, Evreux, and Pacy, or, perhaps, keep still farther out from the Seine, and come upon Paris by Dreux, Pontchartrain, and Versailles. Then they would never suspect one came from the sea-side."

The king slowly nodded his head with a satisfied air, saying, "I see you know what you speak of, my friend. My lord of Beverley, this will do. If you wish to ask him any more questions before you trust yourself to his guidance, pray do so."

"Oh no, sire," replied the earl; "I satisfied myself by my conversation with Major Randal before I spoke with your majesty upon the subject. He assures me that Captain Barecolt knows France well, and I have had cause to be aware that he is a serviceable companion in moments of danger. There is but one bad habit which I trust Captain Barecolt will lay aside for the time, that is, too much talking. I am going, sir, to Paris, on business of importance. The road that I know, is not now

open to me, and I have need of one to accompany me who is well acquainted with the country through which I have to pass. By his majesty's permission, and on Major Randal's recommendation, I have chosen you, sir, for a service which will be rewarded according as it is well performed. But you must recollect, that the least whisper that I am not what I seem, may prove my ruin, though it can benefit no other party, as it is to avoid sending despatches that I go myself."

"You need not be afraid, my lord," replied Barecolt; "for though I am a soldier of fortune, yet it has always been my rule to stick to the cause I first espouse, till my engagement be up. If I do sell myself to the best bidder, as soon as I have touched a crown the market is over. I am no more for sale. The goods are disposed of; and if I were to go over to the enemy even for an hour, I should look upon it that I was stealing myself—a sort of *felo de se* in the code of honour, which I never did and never will be guilty of.

Then, as for discretion, my lord, I declare, upon my word, that all the time I am with you, I will not utter one syllable of truth. I will be all one tall lie, saving his majesty's presence. You shan't have to accuse me of speaking truth indiscreetly, depend upon it."

"But speaking too much at all, Master Barecolt, may do as much harm," replied Lord Beverley; "a lie is a difficult thing to manage."

"For those who are not accustomed to it, my lord," replied Barecolt, with a low bow; "but I am experienced, sir, and owe my life some twenty times over to a well-managed fiction. Oh! a clumsy lie is a hateful thing, not to be tolerated amongst gentlemen; and a timid lie is still worse, for it shows cowardice; but a good bold falsehood, well supported and dexterously planted, is as good as a battery at any time."

"Not a very creditable sort of weapon," said the king, with a grave brow. "But enough of this, sir. Where to deceive an enemy in open strife, to gain a mighty object, such as

security, or conceal one's needful proceedings from the eyes of those who have no right to pry, is the end proposed — some palliation may be found, perhaps, for a deviation from the strict truth. Would it were not sometimes necessary," he added, looking round, as if doubtful of the approval of all present ; " but, at all events, to speak unnecessary untruths is as dangerous as it is foolish, and as foolish as it is wicked."

" May it please your majesty," answered Barecolt, whose self-confidence had now fully returned, " what your majesty says is quite just : but some of these necessary lies I suppose we must tell from the beginning. Neither I nor my lord the earl, I take it, must pass for Englishmen, or there will be no more secresy. We must both say we are Frenchmen, or Dutchmen, or Italians—a good big falsehood to commence with."

Lord Beverley laughed. " I am afraid, sire," he observed, " we must say no more upon the subject, or we shall have a strange treatise

upon ethics ; but, however, as we go across the country to embark, I will endeavour to drill my friend here to use his tongue as little as may be, so that we shall be spared more fraud than needful. I will now humbly take my leave of your majesty, having received my instructions, and by daybreak to-morrow I will be on my way. May God graciously speed your majesty's cause during my absence." Thus saying, he bent one knee, and kissed Charles's hand, and then making a sign to Barecolt to follow, he quitted the presence.

"Now, Master Barecolt," said the earl, as soon as they were in the street, "I know you are a man of action. Be with me by four to-morrow. There is something for your preparations." And he put a small, but heavy leathern bag in his hand, adding, "That is all that is needed for a soldier, I know."

"Good faith ! I must speak with Lord Walton before I go," answered Barecolt, "though it be somewhat late."

"Well, then, come quick," replied the earl ;

and he led the way to the lodging of his friend, where, while Barecolt entertained the young nobleman for near an hour in a room below, Lord Beverley passed some sweet, though parting moments with bright Annie Walton; and when he left her, her cheek was glowing, and her eyelids moist with tears.

CHAPTER XII.

IN a remote part of the country—for England had then remote parts and lonely, which are now broad and open to the busy world—rode along, a little before nightfall, a small party of about ten persons. The weather was clear and mild; but there was in the evening light and in the autumnal hues, that touch of melancholy which always accompanies the passing away of anything that is bright, whether it be a summer's day or a fair season, a joy or a hope.

The country was flat and unbroken; but nevertheless, the eye had no scope to roam, for tall gloomy-looking rows of trees flanked the narrow road on either side, and many

similar lines divided the plain into small fields, which they shaded from the sun, except when he towered at his highest noon. A river, some four or five yards across, slow almost to stagnation, crept along at the side of the lane, with the current just perceptible in the middle, where the water seemed bright and limpid enough: but further towards the side, the thick weeds were seen rising from the bottom, and spreading over the surface, till, at the very edge, they became tangled into an impenetrable green mass, fringed with flags and rushes. Over the clearer part of the stream darted the busy water-spider, and whirling in the air above were myriads of gnats, rising with their irritating hum in tall columns, like the sands of the desert when lifted up by the whirlwind. The light was gray and solemn, and one needed to look to the sky to see that the sun had not actually set.

After riding along this road for the distance of about a mile, a large stone, somewhat like

a gravestone, appeared on the side opposite to the water, and one of the horsemen having dismounted to examine what inscription it bore, deciphred, amongst the moss and lichens that covered it, the following agreeable intelligence: "Here, in the year of grace 1613, and on the 19th day of the month of November, Matthew Peters was murdered by his eldest son, Thomas, who was executed for the same on the 10th of the month of December next ensuing, in the town of Hull, the worshipful John Slackman mayor. Reader, take warning by his fate. Go and do not likewise."

If the party was sad before, this memento of crime and suffering did not tend to make it merrier: the horseman mounted his horse again, and they rode on in silence for another mile and a half, when, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the road, which—though it was still seen proceeding in a straight line till it lost itself in the shadows—seemed to lead nowhere, so dull and desolate did it look, there appeared a large shady

building, to the stone-paved fore-court of which the river formed a sort of moat.

First came a square tower of red brick, edged with stone which had once been white, but now was green; then followed a dull, low wall, probably that of some long corridor, for a slated roof hung over it, and two narrow windows gave the interior a certain portion of light. This was succeeded by a large centre, or *corps de logis*, flat and formal, solemn and unresponding, with similar small windows, and a vast deep doorway. Another long low line of brickwork came after, and then another square tower, and then another mass of brickwork, differing from the former in size and shape, but retaining the same style, and displaying the same melancholy aspect. No ivy grew up around it to break the lines and angles. Not a tree was before it to take off its dull formality. All was heavy, and vast, and grave; and to look upon it one could hardly convince oneself, not that it was inhabited, but that it had been cheered by the

warm presence of human life for years. No sound was heard, no moving thing was seen, except when one raised one's eyes in search of chimneys, and there one or two tall columns of smoke rose slowly and seriously towards the sky, as if they had made a covenant with the wind not to disturb their quiet and upright course.

Over the water, from the stone-court which we have mentioned, swung a drawbridge, which was half elevated, being hooked up by one of the links of the thick chain that suspended it to the posts on the other side, and here one of the men of the party, for it consisted both of men and women, pulled in his horse, saying—

“This is Langley Hall, my lord.”

“I know,” answered Lord Walton, with a sigh. “It is long since I have been here, but I remember it. We see it at an unfavourable hour, dear Annie. It looks more cheerful in the full light.”

“Oh, that matters not, Charles,” answered

Miss Walton, in a gentle tone ; “ sunshine or shade are within the heart more than without ; and I shall find it gay or sad as those I love fare well or ill.”

“ How shall we get in ? ” asked Lord Walton, “ the drawbridge is half up.”

“ Oh ! there is the bell behind the posts,” replied the man who had first spoken ; and, dismounting, he pulled a rope, which produced a loud but heavy sound, more like the great bell of a church than that of an ordinary mansion. Some three or four minutes elapsed without any one appearing to answer this noisy summons ; but at length an old white-headed man came out and asked cautiously before he let down the bridge, who was there.

“ It is Lord Walton and his sister,” answered the young nobleman ; “ let down the bridge, good man. Lady Margaret expects us.”

“ Oh ! I know that, I know that,” rejoined the old servant ; but still, instead of obeying the directions he had received, he retrod his

steps slowly towards the house. His conduct was soon explained by his calling aloud—"William, William! Come and help here! The bridge is too much for one, and here is the young lord and a whole host of people, men, women, and children.—Perhaps it is not the young lord, after all. He was a curly-pated boy when last I saw him, and this looks like a colonel of horse."

"Time! time! Master Dixon; time may make us all colonels of horse," answered a brisk-looking youth in a tight doublet, which set off his sturdy limbs to good advantage, as he strode forward to the old man's assistance.

"Time is a strange changer of curly hair. Doubtless, your good dame patted your head some years ago, and called you her pretty boy; and now if she were to see you, the mother would not know her son, but would call you uncle or grandpapa."

"And so I was a pretty boy—that is very true," answered the old man, coming forward

again towards the bridge, well pleased with ancient memories : “ and my mother did often pat my head—Lord, I remember it as if it were but yesterday.”

“ Ah ! but you have seen a good many yesterdays since then, Master Dixon,” rejoined the young man, following to the edge of the river, with the wise air of self-satisfied youth. “ Now, Master Dixon, you unhook while I pull ;” and, as the bridge was slowly let down, he added, “ Give you good even, my lord. You are welcome to Langley. Good even, lady. You are welcome, too, and so are all these pretty dames. My lady will be right glad to see you all.”

His words were cheerful, and there is something very re-assuring in the gay tones of the human voice. They seem, in the hour of despondency and gloom, to assure us that all is not sadness in the world ; that there is truly such a thing as hope ; that there are moments of enjoyment, and that the heart is not altogether forbidden to be happy—all matters of

which we entertain many doubts when the cloud of sorrow first falls upon us and hides the brighter things of life from our eyes.

How often is it that the reality belies the outside appearance — if not always, at least generally. In dealing with all things, moral and physical, man deceives himself and is deceived, and never can tell the core by the rind. These are truisms, reader ; very trite, very often repeated. I know it ; I write them as such : but do you act upon them ? or you ? or you ?—Where is the man that does ? And if there be a man, where is the woman ? The demagogue is judged by his words, the preacher by his sermon, the statesman by his eloquence, the lover by his looks. All seeming—nothing but seeming ; and it is not till we come to taste the fruit that we learn the real flavour.

All had seemed dark and gloomy in Langley Hall ; and the sadness which Annie Walton had felt in parting with her brother, when strife and danger were before him, had, it is

true, though she would not own it, been deepened by the cold aspect of her future habitation. But the man's cheerful tone first raised the corner of the curtain; and when on entering the wide old hall, she saw the mellow light of the setting sun pouring over a wide champaign country, through a tall window on the other side, and covering the marble floor as if with a network of light and shade, while here a bright suit of armour, and there a cluster of well-arranged arms, and there a large picture of some ancient lord of the place, caught the rays and glowed with a look of peaceful comfort, she felt revived and relieved.

The next moment, from a door at the far end on the right, came forth an old lady, somewhat tall and upright, in her long stays, with a coif upon her head, in token of widowhood, and her silver-white hair glistening beneath it, but withal a bland and pleasant smile upon her wrinkled face, and fire, almost as bright as that of youth, in her undimmed eye. She embraced her nephew and niece with all

the affection and tenderness of a parent, and taking Annie by the hand, gazed on and kissed her again, saying—

“Not like thy mother, Annie; not like thy mother: and yet the eyes—ay, too, and the lips, now you look grave. But come; Charles, come. See where I sit, with my sole companion for the last five years, except when good Dr. Blunt comes over from Hull to tell me news, or the vicar sits with me for an hour on Friday.”

As she spoke she led them into a large room, wainscotted with dark chestnut-wood; and from out of the recess of the window, where the sunshine fell, rose a tall shaggy deer hound, and, with steps majestic and slow, walked up to the young lord and lady, examined first the one and then the other with close attention, stretched himself out with a weary yawn, and taking it for granted all was right, laid himself down again to doze, where he had been before.

“See, Charles, see what a shrewd dog he is,”

cried the old lady: "he knows whom he may trust and whom he may not, in a moment. I had old Colonel Northcote here the other day. What he came for I know not, though I do know him to be a rogue; for Basto there did nought but growl and show his white teeth close to the good man's legs, till he was glad to get away unbitten."

"I sometimes wish we had their instinct, dear aunt Margaret, rather than our sense," replied her nephew; "for one is often much more serviceable than the other."

"Much keener, Charles, at all events," answered the old lady; "and so you are here at length. Well, I got all the letters, and Annie shall be another in the hall when you are gone; and, when she is tired of the old woman, she has a sunny chamber where the robins sing, for her own thoughts; and she shall be free to come and go according to all stipulations, and no question asked, were it to meet a gallant in the wood."

"Nay, Charles, nay," cried Miss Walton,

“why did you write my aunt such tales of me? My only stipulation was, indeed, that I might join him whenever a pause came in these sad doings, my dear aunt.”

“Oh, you shall be as free as air, sweet nun,” replied Lady Margaret. “I never could abide to see a poor bird in a cage, or a dog tied by a chain: and when I was young, I was as wild and wilful as my poor sister Ann was staid and good. I have now lived to well nigh seventy years, still loving all freedom but that which God forbids; still hating all thralldom but that which love imposes. I was long happy, too, in shaping my own course, and I would see others happy in the self-same way. Come, dear child, while Charles disposes of his men, I will show you your bower, where you may reign, queen of yourself, and all within it.”

Annie followed her aunt from the room, passed through another behind it, and entered a little sort of stone hall or vestibule, lighted from the top. Four doors were in the walls,

and a small staircase at the further end, up which Lady Margaret led the way to the first floor above, where two doors appeared on either hand, with a gallery, fenced with an oaken balustrade, running round the hall, at about twelve feet from the ground. Along this gallery the old lady led her young niece, and then through a long and somewhat tortuous passage, which was crossed by another, some twenty yards down, that branched off to more rooms and corridors beyond. Then came a turn, and then another passage, and at the end three broad low steps led up to a large door.

"Dear aunt," said Miss Walton, who had thought their journey would never end, "your house is a perfect labyrinth. I shall never find my way back."

"It is somewhat crooked in its ways, child," answered Lady Margaret; "but you will make it out in time, never fear; that is to say, as far as you need to know it. Now, here is your bower;" and opening the door she led

Miss Walton into a large room looking to the south-west. The sun had just gone down, and the whole western sky was on fire with his parting look, so that a rosy light filled the wide chamber, from a large bay window, where, raised a step above the rest of the room, was a little platform with two seats, and a small table of inlaid wood.

“There I have sat and worked many a day,” said the old lady, pointing to the window, “when my poor knight was at the siege of Ostend. We lived together happily for many years, Annie, and it was very wrong of him to go away at last without taking me with him. However, we shall soon meet again, that is some comfort ; but I have never dwelt in this room since.”

As she spoke, a slow pattering sound was heard along the passage, and then a scratch at the door. “It is Basto,” said Lady Margaret ; “he has come to see that I am not moping myself in my old rooms. Come in, Basto ;” and opening the door the dog stalked

in, first looking up in his mistress's face and wagging his tail deliberately, and then in that of her fair niece with a similar gratulation.

"Ah, thou art a wise man," said Lady Margaret, patting him on the head. "We are growing old, Basto, we are growing old. My husband brought him from Ireland ten years ago, Annie, and he was then some two years old, so according to dog's lives he is about fifty, and yet see what teeth he has," and she opened with her thin, fair, shrivelled hands, the beast's powerful jaws.

Miss Walton had, in the mean time, been taking a review of her chamber, which her kind aunt had certainly made as comfortable and gay as might be. The colours of all that it contained were light and sparkling, contrasting pleasantly with the dark panelling which lined the whole house.—There were chairs and low seats covered with yellow silk, and curtains of the same stuff to draw across the bay window. There were sundry pieces of tapestry for the feet, covered with roses and

lilies, and on either side of the vast oaken mantel-piece, hung brushes of many-coloured feathers. But there was no bed; and the next minute, after some further admiration of the dog's teeth, Lady Margaret opened a door on the right of the fire-place, which led into another room beyond, fitted up as a sleeping chamber, with the same air of comfort as the other. Everything was pointed out to Annie as long as any light lasted, and then the old lady, showing her a third door, observed, "there is a closet for your maids to sleep in; but we must get back, sweet niece, for it is growing dark, and you will fancy goblins in the passage."

Miss Walton laughed, assuring her that she feared nothing but losing her way, and the old lady answered, "Oh! you must learn, you must learn, Annie. 'Tis often good to have a place like this, where one may set search at defiance. In the last reign we had conspiracies enow, God wot! and one poor man, whose head they wanted, was here three days while his enemies

were in the house ; but they never found him, and yet he walked about at ease."

"Indeed," said Miss Walton, as they made their way back ; "how might that be, my dear aunt. If they searched well in the daylight, I should think there would be little chance of escape."

"More than you know, Annie," answered her aunt, drily ; "but I will tell you all about it some day ; and now I will send up William, who is a clever lad, with your maids to show them the way, and bring your goods and chattels up. But what is all this loud speaking, I wonder?"

"I know the voice, I think," answered Miss Walton ; "but if I am right as to the person, he should have been over the seas long ago."

CHAPTER XIII.

“For England’s war revered the claim
Of every unprotected name ;
And spared amidst its fiercest rage,
Childhood, and womanhood, and age.”

So sung a great poet and excellent man, but begging the master’s pardon, if war herself spared them, the consequences of war reached them sadly. It never has been, and never will be, that in times of civil contention, when anarchy has dissolved the bonds of law, the fierce passions, which in the breasts of too many are only fettered by fear, will not break forth to ravage and destroy. There never was yet strife without crime, and never will be. Certainly, such was not the case in the civil wars of the great rebellion, and many an act

was committed with impunity under cover of the disorders of the time, of the most black and horrible character. True, the justice still held his seat upon the bench, to take cognizance of all crimes but rebellion ; true, mayors and corporations existed in cities, and exercised municipal authority ; but the power thus possessed was not unfrequently used for the gratification of the person who held it on the side of the parliament, and if not held by one of that party, was utterly disregarded by those who were.

Of this fact, Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was very well aware ; and after making his escape from the carriages during the skirmish at the bridge, he had, with the assistance of his companion, dragged poor Arrah Neil along with him, assuring the parliamentary committeeman who accompanied him, that he did it solely to deliver the poor girl from the men of Belial, with whom she was consorting, and to place her in the hands of a chosen vessel, a devout woman of his neighbourhood, whom he likened, in an irreverent strain, to Anna the prophetess.

Whether his companion put full faith in his sincerity and singleness of purpose or not, does not much matter : Captain Batten was not one to quarrel with any one's hypocrisy ; and indeed it seemed that a sort of agreement had been made amongst the roundheads—like that by which men take paper money instead of gold and silver—to let each man's religious pretences pass current as genuine coin, however flimsy might be the materials of which they were made. The real purpose of Mr. Dry was, to take poor Arrah Neil back to Bishop's Merton, for his own views ; and his motives were, as the reader will learn hereafter, of a very mixed character. But after having wandered about with Batten and Dr. Bastwick for two days, during the course of which he was more than once seen studying a packet of old letters, he expressed a strong desire to go under the escort of some body of parliamentary troops into Yorkshire, where he declared he had just recollected having some business of importance to transact.

No opportunity occurred for several days,

during which time the whole party who had escaped from the cavaliers, at the invitation of the worthy common councilmen of Coventry, took up their abode for a time in that ancient city, Mr. Dry watching poor Arrah Neil with the closest care, and giving out to the landlady of the inn at which he lodged that she was a poor ward of his, of weak understanding, over whom it was necessary to keep a strict guard.

The pious landlady of Coventry believed every word that Mr. Dry thought fit to tell her. How could she do otherwise, indeed, with so very devout a person? and to say the truth, the demeanour and appearance of Arrah Neil, did not serve to belie the assertions of the old hypocrite who had her in his power. She remained the greater part of each day plunged in deep and melancholy musings; and though she more than once attempted to escape, and said she was wrongfully detained, yet she entered into no long explanations, notwithstanding sundry opportunities afforded her by the hostess, who was not without her

share of curiosity. The fit, or as she called it, the cloud of gloom had come upon her again. It had passed away, indeed, during the active and bustling time of the march from Bishop's Merton, and so indeed it always did, either in moments when all went clear and smoothly, or in times of great difficulty and danger ; but still it returned when any of the bitter sorrows and pangs of which every life has some, and hers had too many, crossed her way, and darkened the prospect of the future.

It was not sullenness, reader ; it was no gloomy bitterness of spirit ; it was no impatience of the ills that are the lot of all ; it was no rebellious murmuring against the will of God : neither was it madness, nor anything like it, though she acted sometimes strangely, and sometimes wildly, as it seemed to the common eyes of the world, from a strong and energetic determination of accomplishing her object at the time, joined with the utter want of that experience of the world which would have taught her how to accomplish it by ordinary means. What was it then ? you will

ask, and may think it strange when I say—*memory*. But so it was ; memory, confused and vague, of things long gone before, which formed so strong a contrast with the present, that whenever sorrow or disappointment fell upon her, some former time, some distant scenes of which she knew not the when or the where, rose up before her eyes, and made her, herself, believe that she was mad. She recollected bright looks and kind words, and days of happiness and nights of peace and repose, to which she could not give “a local habitation and a name.” Were they visions ? she asked herself ; were they dreams ? where could they have occurred ? what could they have been ? Was it from some book which she had read, she often inquired, that such fanciful pictures had been gleaned, and had then fixed themselves as realities in her mind ?

She could not tell ; but when such memories rose up, they took possession of her wholly, —bewildered, confused, overpowered her. For a time she was a creature of the past ; she scarcely believed in the present ; she knew

not which was the reality,—the things gone by, or the things that surrounded her.

During the whole time that she remained at Coventry, this cloud was upon her, and she paid little attention to anything but the continual questioning of her own heart and mind. She attempted, as we have said, to escape,—indeed, more than once; but it was by impulse rather than by thought; and when frustrated, she fell at once back again into meditation. She did not remark that Dry treated her in a very different manner from that which he had ever displayed towards her before; that he called her “Mistress Arrah;” that he tried to soothe and to amuse her. She noticed, but without much attention, that different clothing had been provided for her from that which she had been accustomed to wear; but whenever her mind turned from the past towards the present again, her thoughts busied themselves with Charles Walton and his sister, and she would have given worlds to know how it fared with those she loved.

That the victory had been won by the cava-

liers she was aware, but at what price it had been bought she could not tell, and she trembled to think of it. No one, indeed, spoke to her upon the subject; for Dry was silent, and, for reasons of his own, he took care that she should be visited by none but the landlady of the inn.

At length two pieces of intelligence reached him, on the third day after their arrival in Coventry, which made him resolute to pursue his journey into Yorkshire immediately. The first of these was communicated to him by one of his own servants, to whom he had sent shortly after the skirmish, and was to the effect that the great majority of the people of Bishop's Merton had espoused the royalist cause, and that messengers had arrived from Lord Walton, ordering him to be apprehended immediately, if he made his appearance in the place. With this news, however, came the money he had sent for; and on the evening of the same day, Dr. Bastwick brought him the second piece of information, which was merely that a troop of the parliamentary horse would

pass through Coventry the following day, on their road to Hull, where Sir John Hotham was in command for the parliament. It was added that Master Dry might march safely under their escort, and he accordingly spent the rest of the evening in buying horses and equipage for himself and Arrah Neil, and set out the following day on his journey.

The tedious march towards Hull need not be related; during the whole of the way the old man rode beside his charge, plying her with soft and somewhat amorous words, mingled strangely and horribly with texts from Scripture, perverted and misapplied, and graced with airs of piety and devotion, which those who knew him well were quite aware had no share in his dealings or his heart.

Arrah Neil paid little attention to him—answered seldom, and then but by a monosyllable. To escape was impossible, for he had now too many abettors with him, and she was never left alone for a moment, except when locked into a room during a halt. Yet she looked anxiously for the opportunity; and

whenever any objects were seen moving through the country as they passed, her heart beat with the hope of some party of cavaliers being nigh, and giving her relief. Such, however, did not prove the case, and about noon of an autumnal day, they entered the town of Hull.

Here Mr. Ezekiel Dry separated himself from the troop, with thanks for their escort, and made his way towards the centre of the town, where stood the house of a friend with whom he had often transacted business of different kinds. The friend, however, had, since he saw him, married a wife, and was absent from the town; and though Mr. Dry assured a demure-looking maid-servant, who opened the door, that his friend Jeremiah had always told him he might use his house as his own, the maid knew Jeremiah better than Mr. Dry, and demurred to receiving any guest during her master's absence.

When the worthy gentleman had finished his conversation, and made up his mind that he must seek an inn, he turned round to

remount his horse, and was somewhat surprised to see Arrah Neil gazing round her with a degree of light and even wonder in her look, for which he perceived no apparent cause. The street was a dull and dingy one; most of the houses were of wood, with the gables turned towards the road; and from the opposite side projected a long pole, from which swung a square piece of wood representing, in very rough and rude style, the figure of a swan the size of life. Yet over the dark and time-stained face of the buildings, up the line of narrow street, round the windows and doors carved with quaint figures, ran the beautiful eyes of Arrah Neil, with a look of eager satisfaction which Ezekiel Dry could in no degree account for. They rested principally upon the figure of the swan, however, and as that emblem showed that it was a house of public entertainment, thither Mr. Dry turned the horses' heads, and bade her alight at the door.

Arrah sprang to the ground in a moment, and entered the house with an alacrity which Mr. Dry had never seen her before display.

Something appeared to have enchanted her, for she almost outran the hostess, who led the way, saying, "This way, pretty lady—this way, sir." But when she stopped at a door in a long open corridor, Arrah Neil actually passed her, exclaiming—

"No, not that room; I should prefer this," and without waiting for an answer, she opened the door and went in.

"Dear lady, you seem to know the house quite well," said the hostess; "but yet I do not recollect having seen your pretty face before."

"Talk not of such vanities," said Mr. Dry, with a solemn tone; "what is beauty but the dust, and fair flesh but as a clod of clay?"

"Well, I am sure!" said the landlady, who was what Mr. Dry would have called a carnal and self-seeking person, but a very good woman notwithstanding. "Ah! sir, what you say is very true; we are all nothing but clods of earth; there can be no doubt of it: it's very true, indeed."

Finding her so far docile, Mr. Dry determined to make a still greater impression, in order to insure that his object of keeping Arrah Neil within his grasp, should not be frustrated by the collusion of the landlady. He therefore set to work, and held forth to her upon godliness, and grace, and self-denyingness, and other Christian virtues; touching a little upon original sin, predestination, election, and other simple and easy subjects, with a degree of clearness and perspicuity, such as might be expected from his original station and means of information. The landlady was confounded and puzzled; but it was utterly impossible to tell what he really meant, by the unconnected images, quotations, and dogmas which he pronounced; she was unconvinced of any thing but of his being a vehement puritan, which she herself was not.

However, as it did not do to offend a customer, she shook her head and looked sad, and cried from time to time, "Ah, very true! God help us! poor sinners that we are;" with sundry other exclamations, which, though they

did not convince Mr. Dry that she had not a strong hankering for the fleshpots of Egypt, and the abominations of the Amorites, yet showed him that she was very well inclined to please him, and made him believe that she would fulfil his bidding to the letter.

He accordingly called her out of the room as soon as he thought he had produced his effect, and explaining to her what he pleased to call the situation of his poor ward, he warned her particularly to keep the door locked upon her, to suffer no one to hold communication with her, and especially to prevent her from getting out, for fear she should throw herself into the water or make away with herself, which he represented to be not at all unlikely.

The hostess assured him that she was deeply grieved to hear the young lady's case. She could not have believed it, she said, she looked so sensible and cheerful.

“ Ah ! ” replied Mr. Dry, “ you will see her dull enough soon. It comes upon her by fits ; but you must attend very punctually to my

orders, or something may take place for which you will weep in sackcloth and ashes."

"Oh, sir, I will attend to them most particularly," said the landlady. "What will you please to order for dinner, sir? Had not I better put the lady down a round-pointed knife? Is she dangerous with her hands?"

"Oh, no," answered Mr. Dry. "It is to herself, not to others, she is dangerous. And as for dinner, send up anything you have got, especially if it be high flavoured and relishing, for I have but a poor appetite. I will be back in about an hour; and, in the mean time, can you tell me where in this town lives one Hugh O'Donnell, an Irishman, I believe?"

The landlady paused and considered, and then replied, that she really could not tell; she knew of such a person being in the place, and believed he lived somewhere at the west of the town, but she was not by any means sure.

The moment Mr. Dry was gone, the good woman called to the cook, and ordered a very substantial dinner for the party which had just arrived; but then putting her hand before her

eyes, she stood for the space of a minute and a half in the centre of the tap-room, as if in consideration, then saying, "I won't tell him anything about it—There is something strange in this affair; I am not a woman if I don't find it out." She then hurried up to the room where she had left Arrah Neil, unlocked the door and went in.

The poor girl was leaning on the sill of the open window, gazing up and down the street. Her face was clear and bright; her beautiful blue eyes were full of intellect and fire; the look of doubt and inward thought was gone; a change had come over her, complete and extraordinary. It seemed as if she had awakened from a dream.

When the landlady entered, Arrah immediately turned from the window, and advanced towards her. Then laying her hand upon her arm, she gazed in her face for a moment so intently that the poor woman began to be alarmed.

"I am sure I recollect you," said Arrah Neil. "Have you not been here long?"

“For twenty years,” replied the hostess; “and for five and twenty before that in the house next door, from which I married into this.”

“And don’t you recollect me?” asked Arrah Neil.

“No,” replied the landlady, “I do not; though I think I have seen some one very like you before—but then it was a taller lady—much taller.”

“So she was,” cried Arrah Neil. “What was her name?”

“Nay, I can’t tell, if you can’t,” replied the landlady.

“I know what I called her, but I know nothing more,” answered Arrah Neil. “I called her mother—and perhaps she was my mother. I called her mother as I lay in that bed, with my head aching, my eyes burning, and my lips parched; and then I fell into a long deep sleep, from which I woke, forgetting all that went before; and she was gone!”

“Ay!” cried the landlady; “and are you that poor little thing?” and she gazed upon

her for a moment with a look of sad, deep interest. The next instant she cast her arms round her, and kissed her tenderly. "Ah, poor child!" she said at length, with tears in her eyes, "those were sad times—sad times indeed! 'T was when the fever was raging in the country. Sad work in such days for those who lodge strangers! It cost me my only one. A man came and slept in that bed, he looked ill when he came, and worse when he went. Then came a lady and a child, and an old man, their servant, and the house was full, all but this room and another; and ere they had been here long, my own dear child was taken with the fever. She was near your own age, perhaps a year older; and I told the lady over night, so she said she would go on the morrow, for she was afraid for her darling. But before the morning came, you too were shaking like a willow in the wind, and then came on the burning fit, and the third day you began to rave, and knew no one. The fifth day my poor girl died, and for a whole day I did not see you—I saw nothing but my

dead child. On the next, however, they came to tell me the lady had fallen ill, and I came to watch you, for it seemed to me as if there was something between you and my poor Lucy—I knew not what—you had been sisters in sickness, and I thought you might be sisters in the grave. I cannot help crying when I think of it.—Oh, those were terrible days!” And the poor woman wiped her eyes.

“But my mother,” cried Arrah Neil—“my mother?”

“Some day I will show you where she lies,” answered the hostess; and Arrah wept bitterly, for a hope was crushed out to its last spark.

“She got worse and worse,” continued the landlady; “and she too lost her senses, but just as you were slowly getting a little better, she suddenly regained her mind; and I was so glad, for I thought she would recover too; but the first words she spoke were to ask after you. So I told her you were much better; and all she said was, ‘I should wish to see her once more before I die, if it may be done without harming her;’ and then I knew that

she was going. I and the old servant carried you, just as you were, and laid you on her bed, and she kissed you, and prayed God to bless and keep you ; but you were weak and dozy, and she would not have you wakened, but made us take you back ; and then she spoke long with the old man in a whisper ; but all I heard was, ‘ You promise, Neil—you promise on your salvation.’ He did promise—though I did not know what it was. Then she said, ‘ Recollect, you must never tell her, unless it be recovered.’ Recovered or reversed, she said, I remember not well which, but from that moment she said nothing more, but to ask for some water, and so she went on till the next morning, just as day was dawning, and then she departed.”

A short space passed in silent tears on the part of Arrah Neil, while the good woman who told the tale remained gazing forth from the window ; but at length she continued, “ Before you could run across the floor again, my husband died ; but with him it was very quick. He was but three days between health

and death ; and when I had a little recovered, I used foolishly to wish that you could stay with me, and be like my poor Lucy ; but you were a lady, and I was a poor woman, so that could not be ; and in about six weeks the old man paid all that was owing, and took you away. It is strange to think that you should be the same pretty child that lay there sick near ten years ago.”

“ It is as strange to me as to you,” said Arrah Neil ; “ for, as I tell you, I seemed to fall into a deep sleep, and for a time I forgot all ; but since then all the things which occurred before that time have troubled me sadly. It seemed as if I had had a dream, and I recollect a castle on a hill, and riding with a tall gentleman, who was on a great black horse, while I had a tiny thing, milk white ; and I remember many servants and maids—oh ! and many things I have never seen since ; but I could not tell whether it was real or a mere fancy, till I came into this town, and I saw the street which I used to look at from the window, and the sign of the house that I used to watch as

it swung to and fro in the wind. Then I was sure it was real ; and your face, too, brought a thousand things back to me ; and when I saw the room where I had been, I felt inclined to weep, I knew not why.—Well, well may I weep !”

“ But who is this old man who is with you ?” asked the landlady, suddenly. “ He is not the old servant, who was as aged then as he is now ; and what is this tale he tells of your being his ward, and mad ?”

“ Mad !” cried Arrah Neil—“ mad ! Oh, no ! ’Tis he that is wicked, not I that am mad. He and another dragged me away from those who protected me, and were good to me—kind Annie Walton, and that noble lord her brother, while they were fighting on the moors beyond Coventry. I, his ward ! He has no more right to keep me from my friends than the merest stranger. He is a base, bad man—a hypocrite—a cheat. What he wants, what he wishes, I know not. But he had my poor old grandfather dragged away to prison, and he died by the road.”

“Your grandfather!” said the widow—
“what was his name?”

“Neil,” answered the poor girl; “that was the name he always went by.”

“Why, that was the old servant,” said the hostess. “He had been a soldier, and fought in many battles. I have heard him tell it often. But this man—this man has some object, young lady. He knows more of you than perhaps you think. He told me that you were mad, and his ward; but he knew not that you had a friend so near at hand, who, though she be a poor, humble woman——Hark! there are people speaking at the door. ’Tis he, I dare say. Say not a word to him, and we will talk more by-and-by. Do not be afraid—he shall not take you away again so easily, if there be yet law in the land. But he must not find me with you;” and, thus saying, she opened the door, and left the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE landlady paused for a moment at the door, laid her finger upon her brow, thought for a minute or two, and then, having settled her whole plan to her own satisfaction, descended to the door, at which Mr. Dry, of Longsoaken, was making sundry inquiries regarding the personage for whose address he had, in the first place, applied to herself, and whom he evidently had not found out in his perambulations through the town. A part of what he said was heard by the hostess as she descended, so that she had a clue to what was going on, and, advancing towards him with a low, smart courtesy, she said—

“The dinner’s quite ready, sir; and I have

been thinking since you were gone, that I shall be able to-morrow morning to get you the address of the gentleman you wanted, for a man will be here with eggs who used to supply him, I know."

Mr. Dry looked up with a well-satisfied air, saying, "That is providential, Mistress Green."

"White, sir, White," said the landlady, dropping another courtesy; "my name is White, not Green—a different colour, sir; but it all comes to the same thing. Shall I call the young lady to dinner? It is in this room, sir."

"I will go myself, Mistress White," said Dry; and he was advancing towards the stairs, when the landlady, in a low and confidential whisper, added—

"Poor thing! she is very wild indeed. I went up just now to see if she wanted anything; and she is quite astray, thinking that she was here not long ago, and fancying that she knows all about the place. It's a sad thing to see a poor creature in such a state."

“ Alack ! alack ! and so it is,” rejoined Mr. Dry ; “ but it’s God’s will, Mrs. White, and so we must submit.”

“ Ah, sir ! that’s very true,” answered the good hostess ; “ but yet one can’t help pitying the poor girl. You are sure she is not dangerous, sir ? ”

“ Quite sure,” answered Mr. Dry : “ it is only to herself. But if she were left alone to do what she will, I would not answer for it, that you would not very soon find her in the Humber.”

“ Oh ! she must be looked to, sir—she must be looked to,” replied the landlady. “ Those are sad, dangerous cases. I remember right well when Jonathan Birkett, at Burton—he was my husband’s second cousin, poor, dear man—went mad, and hanged himself——”

“ I will hear that story after dinner,” said Dry in return, pushing past her, and opening the door of the room in which Arrah Neil was seated. But the good landlady had gained her point, having fully convinced Mr. Dry

that she believed the poor girl whom he had brought thither to be perfectly insane ; and her manner during the meal, which followed immediately after, served to confirm the worthy gentleman in that supposition, without at all inducing Arrah herself to imagine that her new friend had any doubt of her sanity.

Though the days had gone by when, as an universal custom, the landlord and his guest sat down together at the same table, and if the traveller presented himself at any other hours than those of the host's own meals, he was likely to remain hungry till the master of the house chose to eat, yet in all cases he who supplied the fare and he who received it were still much more intimately mixed up at meal times than in the present day, when the duties of the hostly office are done by deputy ; and the landlord is intent upon any other cares than hospitable ones.

In the present instance, good Mrs. White remained in the room with her maid, who acted the important part of waiter, and ever

and anon she meddled busily with the dishes, commended the viands to her guests, vaunted the excellence of the ale, strong waters, and wine, which her house afforded, and when not thus employed upon matters connected with her own immediate vocation, took part in the conversation of those who sat at table, with great freedom and satisfaction.

Towards Arrah Neil her tone was of that tender and kindly character, which might well be attributed by Mr. Dry to compassion for the mental affliction under which he had declared her to be suffering, and by the poor girl herself to interest in her fate and situation. But the good landlady was all the time busily engaged in watching eagerly the whole conduct of her male guest, and endeavouring, with all the skill which is afforded by long dealings with many of our fellow-creatures, to extract some information from all she saw regarding his intentions and objects. She perceived that the worthy man of Longsoaken was as tender upon her whom he called his

ward as was consistent with his sanctified exterior, that he often whispered a word to her with a smile which contorted his harsh and wizzened features into anything but a pleasant expression, and that he made a point of helping her himself to everything which he thought dainty ; and, from these and various other signs and indications, Mrs. White was led to ask herself, “ Does the old hypocrite seek her for a wife or a paramour ? ” and she internally added, “ I ’ll spoil the game for him, that I will.”

But notwithstanding her internal resolutions, the good landlady remained perfectly civil and attentive to Mr. Dry ; and guided by tokens, which were not to be mistaken by one of her experience, as to his fondness for certain creature comforts of existence, she at length produced some clear and brilliant liquid, the produce of the Dutch still, in a large flat-sided black bottle, and persuaded him to drink what she called a small glass thereof, though, to say the truth, the measure was very capacious. When he had drank it, he set down

the glass again ; and looking up in Mrs. White's face, observed—

“It is very good indeed, madam, and may be permitted for the support of our poor, weak bodies after a long ride in such bleak and disconsolate weather.”

“Take another glass, sir,” said the hostess, who stood at the end of the table with the bottle still in her hand.

“On no account—on no account, Mistress White,” replied her guest ; “we may use such things discreetly, but by no means go into excess. I would not for the world—don't talk of it.”

There are two ways, however, of understanding that same injunction, “don't talk of it,” which those who have been accustomed to read the book of human nature find no great difficulty in applying properly ; and in this instance, as in many others, Mrs. White saw that it meant “don't talk of it ; but do it without talking,” and therefore replying, “Oh, sir, it's very weak : it's so old, 'tis scarcely stronger than water,” she poured the

glass full, as it stood at Mr. Dry's elbow, while he turned round to say something to Arrah Neil on his other side.

The worthy gentleman took not the slightest notice of this proceeding ; but looking up in Mrs. White's face, he said—

“And so you think, ma'am, that you will be able to get me Master Hugh O'Donnell's right address by to-morrow morning?”

“I am certain of it,” replied the landlady, who thought there was no great harm in a little confidence, whatever might be the result.

Arrah Neil looked down in silent thought, and then raised her large, bright eyes with an inquiring look in the landlady's face ; while Mr. Dry, as if in a fit of absentness, took up the glass, and sipped nearly one half of the contents before he recollected what he was about. He then, however, set it down suddenly, and inquired—

“Pray, can you tell me if Mr. Twigg the dry-salter is now in Hull ? A God-fearing and saintly man, Mrs. White, who used to hold forth to the edification of a flock that was

wont to assemble at the tabernacle in Back-water alley."

"Oh, dear! yes, sir; he is in Hull," replied Mrs. White. "I saw the good gentleman only yesterday."

"Then I will go and visit him presently," answered Mr. Dry. "Humble-minded folks may always profit much of godly conversation; and to do him but justice, he is always ready to use his spiritual gifts for the benefit of others."

Thus speaking, Mr. Dry, after contemplating the glass for a moment, seemed to come to the conclusion that there was no use of leaving in it the little that remained. He accordingly tossed it off with a sudden motion of the hand, and then set it resolutely down upon the table again, as if defying the landlady, the Hollands, or the devil, to tempt him to drink another drop.

The fiend and women, however, have generally more than one way of accomplishing their object, and consequently Mrs. White, after having pronounced an eulogium on the

graces of Mr. Twigg, and his friend Master Theophilus Longbone, the hemp-merchant, who was likewise an acquaintance of her guest's, she set down the bottle carelessly by Mr. Dry's side, and retired into a little room, with a glass window towards the passage, so constructed as to afford a view of the door of the house, with those of the chambers on the ground floor, and also of the foot of the stairs.

Here she remained for about half an hour, while sundry persons came in and out, spoke to her or to some of her attendant satellites, paid money, received change, brought in goods for sale, amongst which it may be as well to record six pairs of very fine pigeons in a basket, or applied for small quantities of cordials, which sometimes they drank upon the spot, sometimes carried away in a vial bottle.

At length the door of the room in which Mr. Dry had eaten his dinner opened, and that worthy gentleman appeared, holding Arrah Neil by the arm, and looking at her with a somewhat inflamed and angry countenance, from which Mrs. White augured that he was

about to say something harsh and bitter to his fair companion. She prepared accordingly to interfere, fully resolved to protect the poor girl at all risks, even if she were obliged to call in the aid of the magistrates, town-council, and governor himself; although, to say the truth, she had no great love or reverence for any of the party now dominant in Hull.

Mr. Dry, however, uttered not a word, but led his poor victim up to her chamber—made her go in—and, locking the door, took out the key. Mrs. White smiled, as with quick ears she heard the various steps of this process, but sat quite still at what we should now call the bar, and marked the movements of Mr. Dry, as he descended and stood for a moment in the passage—those movements being somewhat peculiar, and indicating an internal perturbation of some sort. His back, indeed, was turned towards the worthy hostess, as he looked out of the door leading into the street; but she perceived, that with his feet somewhat apart, he first rested on his heels, then upon

the sole, then upon his heels again, his body gently swaying backwards and forwards, and his hands in his breeches-pockets. Mrs. White had seen such oscillations before in other men; and, when Mr. Dry made up his mind to the course he was to pursue, and walked straight out into the street, she herself hastened into the eating-room, where the first object that she examined was the black bottle, which being held up to the light, exhibited a deficiency of at least one-half.

“Ay, the beast is well nigh drunk,” said Mrs. White, speaking to herself; “but that’s a small matter, if he does no more than get tipsy now and then. I’ll warrant he’ll be in a fine state when he comes home from Master Twigg’s. He’s just such another as himself; and they sit there, and drink and cant till they all go home crying or quarrelling, as if they were the most unhappy men in the world. Well, religion is a good thing in its way, and drink is a good thing; but they don’t do mixed, anyhow.”

Thus saying, she carried off the black bottle,

placed it in its own peculiar receptacle, and then calling a girl whom she named Nancy to take her place in the bar, she walked quietly up to the room of Arrah Neil.

It may be recollected by the reader, that Mr. Dry had carefully locked the door, and put the key in his pocket; but Mrs. White was not a person to be frustrated by such a simple proceeding, for putting her hand to her girdle, from which hung a ponderous bunch of variously formed pieces of iron, she selected one from the rest, which, being insinuated into the keyhole, instantly turned the lock, and gave her admission to the chamber without the slightest difficulty.

Arrah Neil started up with a look of joy, brushing away some drops that had gathered in her eyes, and exclaiming, "I am so glad!"

"What! poor soul!" cried Mrs. White; "you thought he had shut you up so that nobody could get to you. But I am not such a fool as to be without a master-key in my own house, so that if any other be lost I can always open a door. What has the old man

been saying to you, my dear? and what made him look so cross?"

"Oh!" replied Arrah Neil, "he has been saying things I do not understand; and then he asked if I would marry him, and said, that if I would, I should have all his money at his death; but I told him, that if he had all the wealth in the world, I would sooner die."

"Ay, that's what made him cross," cried the landlady. "Men do not like such words as those, my dear. However, you did very right; for the sooner you let the old hypocrite know your mind, the better. He's a deep old villain, though, or I am mistaken. I saw you looked at me when he mentioned Hugh O'Donnell. Do you know anything about him? Do you recollect the name?"

"Yes, I do," replied Arrah Neil. "I am sure I have heard it often; but it must be long ago.—Who is he?—What is he?"

"Nay, that I can't tell," answered Mrs. White. "I recollect him here, I think, in my husband's time; and I have seen him once or twice about, since then, in the streets

of the town, and in the market. But I know nothing of him, except that he is a good sort of man, I believe. One sees such a number of people in a town like this ! He 's got a ship, I believe, and trades to Ireland."

"To Ireland !" said Arrah Neil. And then suddenly breaking off, she added, "I wish I could get away. Cannot you let me out while he's gone?"

"Oh ! that I can, my pretty lady," answered the hostess ; "and you shall go away whenever you like. I won't stop you. But, I think, it will be a great deal better for you to stay a while, and see what all this comes to. We may find out something that may clear up the whole business ; and, besides, what would you do if you were away ? Without money, you would be in a sad plight ; and, I dare say, he does not let you have any in your pocket?"

"I have two crown-pieces," replied Arrah Neil ; "and with that I am sure I could get to Annie Walton and her brother."

The widow shook her head, with a sad

smile. " 'T is a small sum to begin the world with," she said, "and all alone. Besides, they might overtake you. No, no, poor thing! leave it to me to settle some plan for you. I will answer for it, he shall not take you away from here, let him do what he will; and, in the mean time, I will set my wits to work to find out the whole of this story. But now let me hear, who is this Annie Walton and her brother? Come, sit down by me, and tell me all you can recollect since the times we were talking of this morning. It may help me to find out the rest, and that's the point."

Arrah Neil mused; not that she had any hesitation in relating to her companion all that her own memory served to recall; for it is not those who have had few friends that are suspicious, but those who have had friends that have proved false. She had too rarely met with the voice of kindness and sympathy, not to yield her ear to it willingly, especially when it came from one who was linked to the sad, but sweet recollections of the past. She had lived so long in a dream, however,—a

dream from which nothing but the most important scenes and figures had stood forth in full light,—that much was confused and indistinct; and she felt that she could but relate it as it presented itself to remembrance, which, she feared, might afford but a faint and misty image to a stranger. It was with the good widow's first question, then, that she commenced making her reply. "Annie Walton!" she said; "I wonder you have never heard of her, she is so kind and so good; every one knows her by her benefits."

"Ay, but if I understand right, my poor young lady, she lives a long way off on the other side of Coventry," replied the hostess; "and while wicked doings travel on horseback, the report of good ones trudges a-foot. Like the waggoner's cart, it may be richly loaded, but is long a-coming."

"Well, then," answered Arrah Neil, "she is Lord Walton's daughter, sister of kind Charles Walton, who is now Lord. The old man died two years ago, and the lady long before that. However, they have always been good to me,

and to my poor old grandfather, ever since we went to live at Bishop's Merton. 'T is a long while ago now ; and between the time when I was here and the days I first recollect there, there seems a sort of gap, as if we had lived somewhere else. But I remember well our first arriving there, and going with my grandfather to look at two or three cottages, till at length he chose one just out of the town, upon the green, by the old church."

"Were you then quite alone with him as you went from Hull?" asked the landlady.

"Quite ;" answered Arrah Neil. "There was no one with us, and we lived there quite alone ; and all the morning my grandfather used to teach me all he knew, and to make me read and write many an hour, and copy things out of books, and explain to me about different countries. I often thought it wearisome, for it used to keep me from thinking of things that were past, and from trying to bring back to mind people and places that seemed to cross my sight in haste, and disappear again like the motes that we see in the sunshine,

which are lost as soon as they get into the shade. But he was a good, kind, old man, and everybody loved him. The boys used to gather round him on the green at evening close, and listen to the stories he used to tell of the wars in Ireland ; and Lord Walton, from whom he hired the cottage, was very kind, too, and often used to stop and talk with him, as he went by ; and Charles, the young lord, and Miss Walton did the same. I used very often to go up to the house, too, and spent many a happy day there, though I sometimes fancy that, on account of my strange ways, and because I often fell into fits of thought, they believed I was somewhat weak in mind ; but if I could have seen this house, it would have soon brought my brain right. But, as I was saying, they were always very kind to me ; and Charles Walton would spend many an hour at the cottage, and listen to my grandfather's tales."

"Ay," said the hostess, "he was an old soldier, but he did not understand all the arts of war."

Arrah Neil looked up in her face with an inquiring air ; but good Mrs. White only shook her head, and the poor girl proceeded. “ Charles Walton was away in strange countries for a long time ; and then again he went to the wars ; but whenever he came back, he used to visit us, though he grew graver and more thoughtful as he became older, than he was when he was a youth and I was a child ; and I began to feel somewhat afraid of him—no, not afraid, for he was always kind Charles Walton to me, but I felt timid when he spoke to me. However, his father died, and he became lord of all the country round ; and he had much to do and was often away. About that time, this man, who is now here in Hull, began to come sometimes to the house, but my grandfather could not bear him ; and though he treated him civilly, because he was now in great power in the little town, and every one seemed to do just as he bade them, and all were afraid of him, yet he was always cold and distant to him. One day, however, this Ezekiel Dry came in while he was out,

and he took me by the hand and began to say things I did not understand, as he did to-night; and I tried to go away; but he would not let me. Just then, my grandfather came in, and immediately there were high and threatening words; and my grandfather struck him with the staff he carried, and knocked him down upon the ground; then taking him by the arms, he cast him out of the cottage like a dog. After that he did not come again for many months; and in the winter my poor old grandfather was taken ill, and remained ever after feeble and sickly; and when he used to hear of the doings of the parliament against the king, it always made him worse, and he used to speak rash words, I fear. Once or twice he wrote letters, and sent them off by a man that sometimes came to see him, and he received answers, too, which he burned as soon as he had read them. So it went on, till one day this summer, the man Dry came with a number of soldiers, when my grandfather was very ill in bed, and said they had a warrant against him as a

malignant who was plotting treason against the parliament, and they dragged him away, in spite of all I could say, though I told them it would kill him. Lord Walton was absent then, and Dry would fain have prevented me from going with my grandfather; but one of the soldiers was kinder than the rest, and said I should go to tend the poor old man. They put us in a cart and carried us along, and day by day he grew weaker, till at length, at Devizes, he died. Before his death, however, just when his eyes were turning dim, he whispered to me, ‘Go back quick to the cottage, Arrah, and in the back room behind the bed, you will find a bundle of letters and other things, which will tell you all about yourself—I cannot;’ and he said no more.”

“Did you find them?—Did you find them?” cried the landlady, eagerly.

“No,” answered Arrah Neil, “for when I got back to the cottage, it had been stripped of everything, and I, too, had been robbed of all I had taken with me by the soldiers on the

road. One of them said that my gown was pretty, and he would have it for his wife; so I gave it to him, for fear he should take it by force."

The good hostess had mused, paying little attention to the last few words, but at length she exclaimed—"He has got them, young lady. He has got these letters, depend upon it: ay, and he knows more of you than any of us. You must find means to get them back again. That is the only thing to be done."

"Alas! how can I," cried poor Arrah Neil. "I am a mere prisoner, and unable to do anything for myself. Oh, if I could but escape, I should be content."

"Nay, nay, be not so impatient," said Mrs. White; "you shall escape in good time—I give you my word for that; but let us first find out all that we can, for I have a notion that your fortunes are better than they look, or else this man would not be so eager to keep you in his hands. You were no granddaughter of old Sergeant Neil's, that I can

tell you ; and you may turn out a great lady after all. I am sure your poor mother looked and spoke like one of the best of the land ; and I do not see why you should not have your rights as well as another."

"A great lady !" said Arrah Neil, in a musing tone, and with a melancholy shake of the head ; "there is but one reason why I should like to be a great lady, and that is to show my gratitude to those who have been kind to me."

"And a good reason, too," replied the landlady. "So you must not miss your chance, my dear."

"Dame White ! Dame White !" cried a voice from below.

"Hark ! they are calling me," said the hostess ; and opening the door, she exclaimed, "Here am I ; what do you want with me, Nancy ?"

"Here are a heap of folks want to see you directly," screamed Nancy, from the bottom of the stairs.

"I must go, my dear," said the widow,

turning to Arrah Neil, “but I will be back with you directly;” and thus saying, she left her.

But poor Arrah was disappointed in regard to the length of her absence, for more than an hour passed, and the door gave admission to no friendly face.

END OF VOLUME I.



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